

# **Independent Safeguarding Audit of Durham Diocesan Board of Finance and Durham Cathedral**

**2025**

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# Introduction

# 1 Introduction

1.1 The independent safeguarding audit programme for the Church of England (CofE) was commissioned by the Archbishops' Council and is overseen by the CofE's National Safeguarding Team (NST). Led by the INEQE Safeguarding Group and working to a consistent framework, the Audit test the sufficiency of safeguarding arrangements within Diocese Boards of Finance (DBFs) and Cathedrals. They have a particular focus on the CofE's new National Safeguarding Standards that provide the structure for this report.<sup>1</sup>

1.2 Audit findings have taken account of the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) audits, Past Cases Review 2 (PCR2) outcomes, other relevant material as well as evidence from surveys, focus groups, direct correspondence and interviews. For Durham DBF and Durham Cathedral, this involved the following:

- Over 400 documents being collated and analysed prior to the Audit's fieldwork.
- A range of interviews being held with Church officers (staff and volunteers), external partners, victims, survivors and other stakeholders.
- 931 anonymous survey responses being received, which gathered input from key communities connected to the Church. These were submitted by victims and survivors, children and young people as well as those worshipping or working within the DBF, Cathedral and parishes.
- Four focus groups.
- A confidential contact form being made available via a dedicated webpage.
- In total, the Audit undertook 42 separate engagement sessions reaching 111 people.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/national-safeguarding-standards-and-quality-assurance-framework\\_sep23.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/national-safeguarding-standards-and-quality-assurance-framework_sep23.pdf)

- 1.3 The Audit report is separated into Part One, Durham DBF and Part Two, Durham Cathedral. This has been done to ensure that each audited body is able to focus on their own strengths and areas for identified improvement.
- 1.4 The report has been reviewed for factual accuracy by both the DBF and Cathedral.

# **Part One - Durham Diocesan Board of Finance**

## 2 Context

- 2.1 The Diocese of Durham covers a diverse geographical area of 2,530 square kilometres in the North-East of England. Its administrative boundaries encompass the local authorities of Gateshead, Durham, Hartlepool, Stockton, Darlington, South Shields and Sunderland. The Diocese is further divided into three archdeaconries and 13 deaneries, comprising 205 parishes and 243 places of worship across a varied mix of rural, coastal and urban environments.
- 2.2 Stretching from the 'Tyne to the Tees' and from the 'Dales to the Sea', Durham Diocese is home to a rich variety of worshipping communities. Many of these originated in former mining towns, with smaller post-industrial settlements often exhibiting a strong sense of unity. The people of the North-East are well-known for their friendliness.
- 2.3 The region faces significant issues of deprivation. Over half its parishes serve communities ranking in the lowest 20% on the national index of multiple deprivation (IMD), with a third falling into the lowest 10%. Health inequalities, mortality rates, child poverty, unemployment and inadequate housing present stark challenges for Durham's communities. Despite this, strong communities are prevalent throughout the Diocese.
- 2.4 A mix of cultural and natural attractions draw in tourists, including places like the Bowes Museum, the Glasshouse, and Beamish Museum, as well as scenic spots in the Weardale Valley and the North Pennines. The area's diverse geography offers a range of landscapes for visitors to explore.
- 2.5 Education is a key feature of the region, with universities located in Durham and

Sunderland, and a Teesside University campus in Darlington. Collectively, these institutions serve over 49,000 students. Within its boundaries, Durham Diocese also contains four prisons, accommodating just under 3,000 male and over 200 female inmates. Chaplaincy teams are dedicated to supporting the spiritual development of these individuals.

- 2.6 The Diocese encompasses approximately 1.5 million residents, of whom 15,300 are members of CofE worshipping communities. Sunday worship attendance in its parishes has been declining since before the Covid-19 pandemic and continues to do so, with usual attendance estimated at 7,136 across parishes.



### 3 Progress

- 3.1 Overall, the SCIE Safeguarding audit and PCR2 made 35 considerations / recommendations for the DBF in Durham. These covered a range of issues, including capacity, safer recruitment, case management and supporting and engaging with victims and survivors.
- 3.2 The SCIE audit was published in January 2016, resulting in 12 considerations, all of which were accepted. The Audit heard that the implementation of resulting actions was overseen during core meetings, including the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP), professional supervision and the Safeguarding Management Group (SMG). Most of the recommendations have been fully met, whilst some remain ongoing, including work to formalise information sharing agreements with local authorities.
- 3.3 The PCR2 finalised in December 2021, resulted in a range of recommendations, including 23 to be implemented locally. A dedicated action plan was created in response, with progress reports brought to the DSAP by the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO). The Audit heard of significant progress made against each recommendation. That said, the Diocese is aware of the need to continue to learn lessons from victims and survivors to improve service delivery and development.
- 3.4 The DSO has recognised that there are ongoing actions which feed naturally into their work around the National Safeguarding Standards (NSS), reporting that each standard is reviewed on an alternating basis with victims and survivors strategic work monitored at each DSAP meeting. The Audit heard how previous safeguarding strategies reflected learning from SCIE and PCR2, whilst the current version has been refined to reflect the

NSS and learning from the Lessons Learned Review (LLR).

- 3.5 An independent LLR was commissioned by the then Chair of Durham SMG relating to non-recent sexual offences. Published in 2020, this resulted in 18 recommendations, with the majority now fully met and others reliant upon national developments.
- 3.6 Following previous audits and reviews, significant improvements have been implemented. These include a new system for assessing the suitability of clergy seeking school governorships, whereby the 'Joint Education Team (JET)' emails the names of candidates to the DSO for advice. Furthermore, the development of numerous policies and the enhancement of clergy file management, recruitment, and information management procedures have resulted in considerable progress. That said, the Audit will provide a range of recommendations to support the Durham DBF in further advancing these efforts.

## 4 Culture, Leadership and Capacity

### Culture

- 4.1 Significant progress has been made in establishing a strong safeguarding culture across the Diocese. A marked improvement in overall safeguarding practices was observed, and it is evident that safeguarding principles are largely embedded within the DBF and Parish workforce, as well as the Parish worshipping community. A substantial majority of individuals within these groups told the Audit that safeguarding is now integrated into their everyday practices.
- 4.2 Crucially, there is a clear sense of psychological safety regarding safeguarding concerns. A majority of the DBF workforce, an even greater number of the Parish workforce, and a significant majority of the Parish worshipping community feel empowered to raise concerns without fear of reprisal. This widespread confidence is a testament to the effectiveness of the efforts made to build an open and accountable environment. Many of those engaged by the Audit acknowledged the DBF's willingness to invest in safeguarding support and their commitment to continuous reflection and improvement.
- 4.3 The majority of the DBF workforce viewed its environment as supportive, respectful, and collaborative, with only a very small number reporting experiencing defensiveness or stress. This indicates a generally constructive and harmonious workplace. The Adviser in Pastoral Care, Counselling and Clergy Wellbeing reinforced this positive sentiment, noting a healthy atmosphere of trust where employees are empowered to make decisions based on their expertise. This view was supported by others, not least new staff members who also reported finding the organisational culture refreshing, stating they valued the balance between trust and accountability.

- 4.4 Similarly, both the Parish workforce and worshipping community describe their culture as welcoming, supportive, and inclusive, highlighting a strong, community-oriented ethos.
- 4.5 While the steps taken to improve safeguarding and culture are considerable, there remains work to be done, not least in ensuring that a disconnect does not widen between the DBF and parishes. It was reassuring that there was little evidence of over confidence; in fact, there was a clear understanding that the improvement journey is ongoing.

### **Leadership**

- 4.6 The Acting Diocesan Bishop holds ultimate accountability for safeguarding - accountability and responsibility that she unequivocally accepts.
- 4.7 The Audit saw and heard significant evidence of the Acting Diocesan Bishop's commitment, enthusiasm and the impact she has had since taking up the acting role. All those engaged by the Audit reflected upon her good work and the way she has engaged with, supported and encouraged them.
- 4.8 Moreover, the Audit process successfully triangulated evidence indicating instances where she has raised challenges and made difficult authoritative decisions.
- 4.9 From a safeguarding perspective, the Acting Diocesan Bishop is supported by a strong, collaborative leadership team, including an effective and thoughtful Diocesan Secretary (who has engaged in a range of activities such as the Audit monitoring body, resulting in an enhanced insight and level of understanding of safeguarding), an experienced and effective DSO and committed Archdeacons. That said, notwithstanding the

aforementioned supportive senior leaders, the role of the Diocesan Bishop could be better supported. For example, a Suffragan Bishop supporting the Safeguarding portfolio could provide a mechanism to share tasks, test thinking and mitigate the considerable pressures associated with ultimate safeguarding accountability.

**Recommendation D1:** To enhance support for the Diocesan Bishop and ensure continuous senior leadership oversight of safeguarding matters, it is recommended that a Suffragan Bishop be formally integrated into the DBF safeguarding processes. The responsibilities of the Suffragan Bishop should include maintaining awareness of safeguarding matters, attending relevant safeguarding meetings, supporting the Diocesan Bishop on safeguarding issues, and providing objective perspectives and challenge on complex issues. For effective implementation, the role requires a clear definition that maintains the Diocesan Bishop's ultimate accountability.

## Archdeacons

- 4.10 The Audit recognises Archdeacons as integral figures within the diocesan structure. Their established presence and direct connection to parishes offer a foundational strength in local oversight and support. Their role provides a unique vantage point to understand and engage with communities, positioning Archdeacons as pivotal in enhancing safeguarding practices.
- 4.11 The following recommendations focus on strengthening the safeguarding contributions of Archdeacons through clearer role definitions, enhanced support for parish engagements and specialised training.

**Recommendation D2:** The Audit commends the Diocesan Bishop's decision to appoint a 'Lead Archdeacon for Safeguarding'. This role has the potential to significantly enhance strategic oversight and improve the flow of information. However, to ensure that this does not inadvertently diminish the safeguarding responsibilities of the other Archdeacons, the Audit proposes that this position be a tenured one, with the responsibility rotating among the Archdeacons over an appropriate period of time.

**Recommendation D3:** To ensure Archdeacons are comprehensively informed and effective during parish engagements (including informal visits and more formal visitations / inspections), the DBF should enhance the existing process and templates for all pre planned parish visits. This should include implementing annual planning meetings with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST) to align strategies. Crucially, pre-visit briefings from the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) should also be formalised, providing Archdeacons with updates about all relevant safeguarding issues, specific cases, and the status of any safety plans pertinent to their geographical area. This will allow for Archdeacons to be fully sighted on concerns and more equipped to test and support good safeguarding practice. Following visits, post-visit debriefings with the DSO and DST are recommended to capture insights and inform diocesan strategy.

In addition, to assure itself of the quality and impact of Parish Dashboard data, the DBF should define and adopt a Parish Dashboard quality assurance process. While it should be built on the principle of 'working with' rather than 'doing to', this process should involve dip sampling to test the veracity of Parish Dashboard data.

**Recommendation D4:** Archdeacons should receive dedicated training and support regarding their functions as Core Group Chairs. Training should focus on facilitation skills for chairing

these sensitive meetings and could be enhanced through the adoption of regional good practice workshops. Furthermore, to ensure impartiality, conflict of interest checks for chairs should be a standard practice.

### **The Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO)**

- 4.12 The current Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) is an experienced and highly credible safeguarding professional with a background in statutory services. Their role encompasses operational safeguarding responsibilities, including case management, leading complex investigations, conducting interviews, ensuring procedural adherence, delivering some training, supporting Parishes and their PSOs and liaising with diocesan institutions. Concurrently, the DSO provides strategic leadership, attending and contributing to senior leadership meetings (when capacity permits), representing safeguarding across various forums, and actively promoting its importance among clergy and volunteers.
- 4.13 The effectiveness of this role is often constrained by these competing demands. The pressures arising from the DSO's operational and strategic functions are further exacerbated by the limited professional support available. This includes no in-house day to day supervision or support, only limited periodic professional supervision from a Regional Safeguarding Advisor (RSL), and the absence (beyond the DSO) of an actual safeguarding team. These issues can be compounded by additional external responsibilities, such as the recent temporary provision of safeguarding support to the Cathedral. This can result in delays in tasks and, in some cases examined by the Audit, less-than-optimal record keeping.

- 4.14 Recommendations concerning the health and wellbeing of staff involved in safeguarding and the need to reinforce capacity are addressed in other areas of this report.

### **Governance DBF**

- 4.15 The DBF operates a range of appropriate governance and oversight meetings. These reflect the expectations of the CofE and the relevant requirements, such as those issued by the Charity Commission.
- 4.16 Whilst this is positive and the minutes of Bishops Council, Diocesan Synod and Bishops Leadership Team (BLT) evidence the consideration of safeguarding issues, the DSO's formal attendance and membership at these forums is less than clear. For example, safeguarding is a standing agenda item at the BLT, although it is the Archdeacon lead for safeguarding who presents the DSO's report. This may be linked to the capacity of the DSO, impacting on their availability or, decisions that this might not be the best use of their time given the extraction from potential operational tasks. That said, leadership oversight is supplemented by the Safeguarding Management Group (SMG) focused on operational oversight and the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) providing scrutiny.

### **Safeguarding Management Group (SMG)**

- 4.17 The SMG is an internal meeting that focuses on a range of operational safeguarding issues, such as the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard and Hub, training updates, record reconciliation, strategy discussions, the National Safeguarding Case Management System (NSCMS), and reviews of closed cases and core groups.
- 4.18 The Audit also noted the consideration of broader initiatives such as the National Clergy Register, Alexis Jay Review, NST visits, and crucial survivor support. It is unclear as to



how the SMG complements the scrutiny role of the DSAP and a recommendation is made to address this.

### **Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP)**

4.19 The Audit found that the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) has significant strengths and is led by an effective and experienced Chair who retains an extensive safeguarding background. The Chair was noted as having proactively broadened the panel's membership, successfully engaging representatives from both Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs) and the police. Furthermore, there was clear evidence of a willingness to challenge and reflect on current practices.

4.20 Despite these strengths, the Chair and other individuals engaged by the Audit acknowledged areas for improvement. These include strengthening the DSAP's structure and thematic focus, engaging a more inclusive membership, proactively improving victim and survivor engagement, and consistently ensuring a more rigorous approach to scrutiny and accountability.

4.21 The DSAP should:

**Recommendation D5:** Integrate robust methods to measure the impact of safeguarding practices across all relevant activities, including an enhanced programme of internal assurance audits. This enhanced programme could be significantly strengthened by developing a Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) skills database, enabling greater involvement of volunteers with relevant safeguarding skill sets in these crucial audits. Such measures will provide valuable data for continuous improvement and allow for a more effective evaluation of policy and practice.

**Recommendation D6:** Establish a three-year meeting cycle for in-depth reviews of specific areas aligned with National Safeguarding Standards (NSS) and action plans. This cycle should be complemented by annual planning meetings with the Safeguarding Management Group (SMG) and other key stakeholders to ensure cohesive and complementary activities, thereby avoiding duplication of effort and enhancing the overall impact of safeguarding oversight.

**Recommendation D7:** Conduct a comprehensive review of the functions of the SMG alongside those of the DSAP to ensure optimal strategic alignment and collaborative effectiveness in safeguarding oversight.

**Recommendation D8:** Develop a written update proforma for Core DSAP members to complete before meetings. Core member status should be agreed by the Chair and include those with specific responsibilities or who represent agencies that offer valuable insights into current and developing safeguarding themes. Examples include the DSO/CSL/CSA, a Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) or Parish representative or an attendee from a charity or statutory partner. This proforma should concisely capture emerging safeguarding issues, the impact of their safeguarding practices during the last reporting period, and a dynamic question that changes after each meeting. This dynamic question is designed to address key issues such as the cost-of-living crisis, the implementation of the Jay Report, or any other relevant contemporary issue.

The DSAP Chair should be given sufficient days to facilitate their outreach, especially to statutory agencies that are difficult to reach consistently.

## Clergy Files - Blue Files

4.22 The Audit found that Blue Files are efficiently administered and securely maintained by the Bishop's Office. Good practice was identified regarding the office's approach to fireproof storage and third-party access to records. Furthermore, good practice is evident in the examination of these files by both the Bishop's Chaplain, the DSO and the verification of information included in Clergy Current Status Letters (CCSLs). However, the DSO's examination of Blue Files, both upon receipt and prior to dissemination, should be formally recorded to ensure comprehensive record-keeping.

**Recommendation D9:** The Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) should formally record the examination of Blue Files upon both receipt and prior to dissemination, ensuring comprehensive record-keeping.

## Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST) Capacity

4.23 Notwithstanding the good work delivered by the DST, the Audit identified significant capacity issues given the team's remit and functions. The resourcing model is fundamentally reliant on them and therefore too small. A more resilient model is needed to ensure contingency and to build a blended team with complimentary safeguarding skill sets.

**Recommendation D10:** A strategic restructuring of the diocesan safeguarding arrangements should be undertaken to create a dedicated Safeguarding Directorate that is led by a professional Director of Safeguarding. This should also include the Cathedral's safeguarding functions.

*Note: This recommendation should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Directorate section in the [Independent Safeguarding Audits Annual Report \(2024/2025\)](https://ineqe.com/churchofengland/).<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> <https://ineqe.com/churchofengland/>

**Recommendation D11:** The DBF should immediately prioritise recruiting an additional full-time caseworker role, potentially as a job share, to increase team capacity and broaden the range of experience within the DST.

**Recommendation D12:** The DBF should develop a portfolio approach within the DST to enable more focused work on critical areas such as victim / survivor support, offender management, and training delivery.

**Recommendation D13:** A cost-benefit analysis of the current training provision should be conducted by the DBF. This analysis will determine the appropriateness of continuing with existing arrangements versus investing in an additional safeguarding professional and allocating a training budget for external provision when required. The primary objective of this review is to identify which model would most effectively enhance the DST's overall capabilities and reach.

**Recommendation D14:** The DBF should provide targeted training and upskilling for the Safeguarding Support Officer (SSO) to maximise their contribution to administering essential safeguarding support functions. These functions include Dashboard support, training evaluation, call filtering, and direct support to parishes. This enhancement would not only improve parish support but also facilitate the gathering of insights on safeguarding activities and efficiently filter non-safeguarding enquiries.

## Linking with the Cathedral

4.24 The Audit welcomes the recruitment of a dedicated Cathedral Safeguarding Advisor / Officer (CSA/O). To ensure good practice, the professional supervision of this new role

should, in consultation with the Cathedral Leadership Team, be embedded within the wider DST. The CSA/O should develop specialist knowledge in safeguarding specifically within a Cathedral context and provide vital contingency support for unforeseen operational needs or other exigencies within the DST.

**Recommendation D15:** The DBF should embed the professional supervision of the Cathedral Safeguarding Advisor / Officer within the wider DST. This role should cultivate specialist knowledge in Cathedral safeguarding and serve as a contingency resource for the wider DST to address unforeseen operational demands. This arrangement should be reciprocal, offering contingency support within the Cathedral environment when required.

## 5 Prevention

- 5.1 Safer Recruitment is a priority in the DBF. The House of Bishops' guidance (Safer Recruitment and People Management) is followed, and processes are aligned to legislation. In general, practice exhibits many strengths. Personnel who are engaged in recruitment undergo relevant training, and information is readily accessible through the DBF's website.
- 5.2 The DBF actively supports safer recruitment in parishes. A key element of this support is the Safeguarding Dashboard, which has been successfully rolled out and is utilised by 95% of Durham's parishes as a vital tool for compliance and administrative assistance. The DBF leverages the dashboard's alert function to disseminate updates and policy changes directly to parishes. Furthermore, parishes are encouraged to adopt the Safeguarding Hub, especially those with high activity. While direct diocesan access to hub data is restricted by data privacy, ongoing discussions aim to establish a data sharing agreement. To maintain proactive engagement, the DBF issues monthly safeguarding-focused bulletins to all PSOs, hosts regular PSO gatherings, and attends Parochial Church Council (PCC) meetings to underscore collective safeguarding responsibilities. Furthermore, the DBF supports PSO induction training, delivered three times a year with flexible scheduling for volunteers, and provides specific dashboard training sessions.
- 5.3 Dashboard data is used strategically to pinpoint training deficiencies, such as those among PCC members. Resources are continually developed, including a comprehensive PSO toolkit, and guidance on safer recruitment processes is available on the Diocese's webpages. Feedback is systematically gathered through an annual anonymous PSO survey, which directly informs diocesan action plans. Positively, there are processes in

place to monitor and report on the trends and data available through the Parish Dashboard. That said, the Audit makes the following recommendation to support the transition from the current 'self-assessment' process to a system which facilitates dip sampling and quality assurance. See Recommendation D3.

- 5.4 Safeguarding matters are routinely discussed and managed at various levels both within and outside of the DBF's arrangements. This includes bi-monthly meetings with colleagues from other regionally based DBFs and joint training team meetings with the Diocese of Carlisle.
- 5.5 Safeguarding is also embedded into a range of administrative structures, influencing leadership training, material for recruiting support staff, explanations of Core Groups, and website wording regarding training requirements. The Regional Safeguarding Lead provides supervision and facilitates the sharing of best practices, while Parish Safeguarding Officer Support meetings are established across dioceses to facilitate peer-to-peer learning and support. The DSO, with assistance from the SSO, distributes a monthly bulletin to all PSOs. Furthermore, the DBF participates in national Dashboard User Group meetings.
- 5.6 Other initiatives highlighting the DBFs commitment towards safeguarding include a recent 'meet and greet' event for PSOs hosted by the Acting Diocesan Bishop, fostering direct engagement and support. Safeguarding Sundays have also raised awareness and encouraged best practice within parishes. In summer 2024, a National Safeguarding Standards Information session for parishes was held, followed by a further six National Safeguarding Standards Information sessions held across the Diocese throughout the Autumn of 2024. This demonstrates the DBF's dedication to ensuring parishes are well-

informed about national guidelines and expectations.

- 5.7 Beyond these structured arrangements, the Audit found that the DBF workforce highly valued informal discussions with colleagues and the DSO. These interactions were particularly appreciated given their focus on participation, learning, and professional development for individual roles in respect of safeguarding. However, it was noted that these opportunities were not always available as frequently as desired. To address this issue, the Audit makes the following recommendation.

**Recommendation D16:** In addition to the infrequent conversations outlined, the DBF should establish structured opportunities for informal safeguarding discussions and peer support. This could include regular ‘safeguarding coffee hours’ or ‘lunch and learn’ sessions for small groups of staff and / or promoting an internal online forum or chat group where staff can pose questions, share insights, and seek advice from colleagues and the DSO. The DBF should also ensure that line managers are encouraged and empowered to allocate time for these informal interactions within their teams.

- 5.8 The Diocese of Durham's safeguarding policies webpage<sup>3</sup> provides a comprehensive overview of essential documents and policies designed to promote a safer Church environment. Key policies include the overarching ‘Promoting a Safer Church - House of Bishops Policy Statement,’ the specific ‘Diocesan Safeguarding Policy,’ and a ‘Whistleblowing Policy.’ The site also offers various guidance and resources, such as posters that detail the roles and responsibilities of Church officers, the ‘National Safeguarding Standards Code of Safer Working Practice’, and a leaflet supporting victims

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.durhamdiocese.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-documents-and-policies/>



and survivors. Additionally, there's specific guidance on 'Responding to Safeguarding Concerns or Allegations that relate to Children, Young People or Vulnerable Adults', alongside parish safeguarding resources including the 'Parish Safeguarding Handbook Summary Guidance on Domestic Abuse for Parishes'.

- 5.9 Good safeguarding practice is promoted through strong collaboration and oversight by the DBF. The DSO and the former Cathedral Safeguarding Officer (CSO) (when in post) regularly shared best practice by sitting on each other's strategic safeguarding groups. The independent chairs of both the DSAP and the Cathedral Safeguarding Steering Group (SSG) also meet routinely to ensure there is a clear line of sight of the strategic priorities and activities across both forums.
- 5.10 Effective arrangements for partnership working are also evident through the Dean of the Cathedral being a member of the Bishop's Leadership Team. Historically, the DSO and CSO (currently vacant) provided cover for each other, ensuring continuous support. Beyond internal activity, the DSO actively participates in external safeguarding groups, such as the Durham Adult Safeguarding Board and the Anti-Slavery Network. This is good practice, helping to maintain important good relationships with key partners.
- 5.11 The DBF uses a variety of methods to raise safeguarding awareness. Face-to-face efforts include training, Archdeacons' inspections and visitations, team and managers' meetings, supervision, roadshows, and Bishop-led events. Awareness is also raised through Synod meetings, and PSO support groups. Lastly, communications play a key role through emails, fortnightly updates, posters, and pastoral letters.
- 5.12 Whilst the Audit found evidence of good communications that promoted a range of relevant

information about safeguarding, there are opportunities to strengthen the DBF's arrangements in this regard.

**Recommendation D17:** The DBF should adopt the use of an email marketing system for issuing and managing the safeguarding newsletter.

**Recommendation D18:** The DBF should conduct a review of its safeguarding webpages data to identify user behaviour patterns, popular content, and areas for improvement. The DBF should use the analysis of this data to inform and enhance the design, layout, user interface (UI), and user experience (UX) of the website.

**Recommendation D19:** The DBF should develop and implement a structured communications plan for safeguarding messages across its digital channels. This plan should include a content calendar outlining timely, considered safeguarding messages for regular inclusion in email newsletters (e.g., a dedicated section or recurring feature) and scheduled posts on relevant social media platforms. Content should be varied, covering topics such as policy updates, training opportunities, real-life examples (anonymised), reminders of reporting mechanisms, and messages promoting a culture of vigilance and support. The DBF should assign responsibility for content creation, approval, and scheduling, ensuring all messages are consistent, accessible, and align with current safeguarding guidelines. Regular review of engagement metrics should inform future content strategy to maximise reach and impact.

5.13 The DBF has refined its approach to youth engagement. While a youth council previously operated, it is currently paused to facilitate a period of targeted activity that listens to young people to understand their needs. The DBF's revised strategy covering engagement prioritises equipping churches to deliver youth work, providing support for meaningful engagement, and cultivating a cohort of young leaders to inform diocesan policy.

- 5.14 In the past, the DBF facilitated several initiatives to engage with children and young people and gather their insights. These included the Growing Young Leaders course, which, although not running in 2024-25, previously focused on developing young people's discipleship, leadership, and involvement in their local churches. Another initiative was the Pulse Youth Event, a termly gathering for young people in school years 7-13, organised by the DBF's Growing Younger Team. A 'listen event' was held in March 2025 to gather feedback from young people and their youth leaders about the future direction of Pulse. Additionally, a Children's Council, comprising young people aged eight to thirteen, has also met to amplify children's voices within their local churches and the wider Diocese.

**Recommendation D20:** The DBF should undertake a review to map the types of activities involving children and young people that are taking place within parishes, what the focus of such activities are and to identify any aspects of good practice and / or potential gaps.

**Recommendation D21:** Further to reviewing existing practice, the DBF should consider implementing new and / or extended models for youth participation in consultation with parishes and its existing networks, including the Cathedral.

- 5.15 The effectiveness of the DBF's practice in hearing the specific voices of victims / survivors of abuse and how it learns from their experiences, is set out in the Victims and Survivors section of this report.
- 5.16 The Audit observed evidence of appropriate risk assessments for Church activities where potential safeguarding risks were identified.
- 5.17 In terms of the arrangements to ensure that DBF staff are sufficiently safeguarded and

potential risks are mitigated, there is a Lone Working Policy that is accessible within the Staff Handbook. Related details are also set out in the Code of Safer Working Practice and the Safer Environment and Activities guidelines.

- 5.18 The Audit saw evidence of the DBF's focus on professional and personal boundaries, with these important aspects being referenced in the safeguarding learning and development strategy, the Safer Environment and Activities guidelines, the Spiritual Accompaniment Course, Spiritual Direction Training and the broader safeguarding training on offer across the Diocese. Furthermore, they form a defined component of the information session delivered to parishes on the National Safeguarding Standards.
- 5.19 The DBF promotes awareness and mitigates safeguarding risks related to the physical layout and usage of Church buildings through a range of activities. For example, parishes are provided with a comprehensive suite of documentation and tools, including a Home Visiting Risk Assessment Checklist, a Volunteer Driver Agreement Model, a standardised Activity Risk Assessment Template, a Children and Youth Consent Form, a dedicated Hazardous Activities and Residential Consent Form, a Model Personal Risk Assessment Tool, and a supplemental Model Activity Risk Assessment Template.

## 6 Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk

- 6.1 The DBF's risk register covers key corporate issues. There is a dedicated section on safeguarding where concerns are thoroughly documented. This allows for a specific focus on safeguarding and is considered good practice. That said, at the time of its submission to the Audit, it was not clear when the safeguarding risks had last been updated. There is scope to strengthen practice in this context.

**Recommendation D22:** The DBF should include defined review dates for all risks described within its Risk Register(s). Risks should be reviewed on a quarterly basis or as a minimum, at a six-monthly basis, with any changes (and the rationale for these) being documented in relevant meeting minutes.

- 6.2 The Audit identified evidence of good practice by the DST/DSO in their efforts to encourage the reporting of safeguarding concerns. This is achieved through their application of a 'low threshold' for the team's engagement, thereby helping them to build relationships and promote a culture in which concerns are more likely to be escalated than not. By adopting this way of working, the DST/DSO achieves a better oversight on cases where the reporting person might not fully grasp the potential risks. The value of this approach and the support provided is highlighted in feedback received by the Audit from parishes.

*"The fact that [the DSO] is so well known and so local, we have the confidence to contact them."*

*"Our DSO is always available and responds wisely and promptly to all concerns."*

- 6.3 Referrals and enquiries made to the DST are effectively triaged. With responsibility for decision making resting with the DSO, each case is appropriately assessed and there are clearly defined pathways for further action. These typically involve one or more of the following:
- a) Onward referrals to statutory authorities.
  - b) The management of individuals within the worshipping community.
  - c) The provision / signposting to support.
  - d) The initiation of disciplinary processes, such as Clergy Disciplinary Measures (CDM).
  - e) Initiation of the Safeguarding Case Management procedure (formerly Core Groups).
- 6.4 The DSO has a clear understanding of the thresholds for action and the need to engage statutory authorities when required. In circumstances where concerns might be unclear, arrangements are in place whereby (depending upon the nature of the concern), a joint visit with the Archdeacon can occur to ensure a clear determination. All cases requiring further action by the DST are initially allocated to the DSO.
- 6.5 At the time of the Audit, the DST had 207 safeguarding incidents recorded on its systems, with 156 contacts categorised as 'safeguarding advice' and 85 as being categories as 'open' on the National Safeguarding Case Management System (NSCMS).
- 6.6 The National Safeguarding Case Management System (NSCMS) is a centralised and secure database, allowing for safeguarding concerns to be reported and recorded. There is also a facility to attach relevant case reports, quickly retrieve referrals to external agencies and record correspondence and documentation in one place. The DBF has yet to fully transition to using the NSCMS as its primary system for case recording and management. Several outstanding issues need to be addressed to complete this, including

the creation of concern summaries, correctly assigning 'Profile Flags' (such as for a 'Safety Plan'), and uploading of all supporting files and documentation to records. Furthermore, a consistent naming convention / recording structure is needed for recurring file types (such as Core Group meeting minutes) and concerns need to be appropriately categorised, with key information summarised within the system's chronology function.

**Recommendation D23:** The DBF should commission an external resource to comprehensively review, cleanse, and curate the inputting of existing data into the NSCMS. This activity should operate under terms of reference set by the DSO and adhere to the 'Guiding Principles' for the NSCMS.

6.7 Safeguarding risk assessments conducted by the DST are initiated in response to concerns involving Church officials, members of the religious community, or individuals from specific high-risk categories seeking participation in Church events or services. Recent assessments conducted adhere to national directives and prioritise the safety of victims, potential victims, vulnerable individuals and the respondent. That said, during the review of safeguarding risk assessments, it was noted that several were lacking detail and were less comprehensive. These safeguarding risk assessments had not been completed recently and were undertaken using a 'Type A' template. The Audit observed that although the DSO reported conducting regular and active reviews of risk assessments and safety plans, there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate that these were consistently carried out with the required frequency. Furthermore, the Audit acknowledges that there is no explicit requirement to discontinue using the existing 'Type A' template for safeguarding risk assessments. However, it is the Audit's view that if risk assessments are being regularly reviewed and updated, it would be logical and beneficial to transition these to the new, updated format. The Audit have previously highlighted opportunities for enhancement

within the national ‘Standard Risk Analysis and Risk Management’ template.<sup>4</sup> That said, the following is recommended.

**Recommendation D24:** The DBF should implement a systematic process for the review and updating of all safeguarding risk assessments related to active Safety Plans. This process should include assessing new or evolving risks and revising control measures, ensuring continuous alignment with current good practice, integration of lessons learned from incidents (if any), and reflect a contemporary understanding of risks. These updates should adopt the current ‘Standard Risk Analysis and Risk Management’ format.

6.8 At the time of the Audit, there were eight respondents categorised as having active Safety Plans. The Audit saw effective use of these plans in managing risk. They were well-defined, proportionate to the identified risks, and appropriately authorised. Positively, the practice seen in the more contemporary plans adhered to the national template issued by the CofE, outlining what was working well, identifying risks and detailing the potential consequences of non-compliance.

6.9 The Audit team was able to meet directly with one respondent regarding their Safety Plan, alongside two reference group members. The Review Group demonstrated a solid understanding of the consultation protocols with the DST. They clearly outlined the steps taken to minimise identified risks, confirmed that reviews were conducted face-to-face and demonstrated detailed knowledge of the Safety Plan itself.

6.10 In recognition of the often complex risks being managed through Safety Plans, and to

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<sup>4</sup> See the Independent Safeguarding Audits Annual Report 2024, Page 66, <https://churchofengland.blob.core.windows.net/annual-report/church-of-england-independent-safeguarding-audits-annual-report-2024.pdf>



further strengthen this critical area of practice, targeted training should be delivered specifically for reference groups and the broader cohort of individuals involved in monitoring respondents. Recommendations in this regard are set out in the Learning, Supervision, and Support section of this report.

- 6.11 The Audit saw evidence of the effective use of Safeguarding Case Management Groups (SCMGs) in managing complex cases involving Church officers. Key aspects considered from the outset include conflicts of interest, support for both complainants and respondents, and ensuring timely information sharing with statutory agencies.
- 6.12 The DBF is a registered charity with a statutory requirement to submit Serious Incident Reports (SIRs) to the Charity Commission for England and Wales. In the last three years, two cases have met the threshold for SIRs, with their respective submissions being appropriately shared with the NST and aligning with the national guidance issued by the Charity Commission.
- 6.13 The DBF has several national Information Sharing Agreements (ISAs). These include the data sharing agreement with the police, the CofE National Safeguarding Information Sharing Agreement and an Operating Agreement (involving the Joint Education Team) that has been established between four entities: the Newcastle Diocesan Education Board Limited (NDEB), the Durham DBF, the Joint Education Team LLP (LLP), and the Newcastle DBF.
- 6.14 The Partnership Agreement for Safeguarding Children, Young People, and Vulnerable Adults, established between the DBF and the Cathedral, outlines a clear process for resolving disputes. Initially, any disagreements falling under this agreement should be

addressed by the DSO and the CSO. If they are unable to reach a resolution, the matter will be escalated to the Diocesan Secretary, the independent Chair of the DSAP, the Chief Operating Officer of Durham Cathedral, and the Chair of the Durham Cathedral Strategic Safeguarding Committee, who will then be responsible for finding a resolution. Additionally, if individuals are dissatisfied with the resolution of a safeguarding matter and cannot resolve it with the DSO, the website<sup>5</sup> directs them to first contact the Chair of the DSAP.

- 6.15 Whilst the existence of this clearly defined process is positive, awareness of it was found to be somewhat limited. This could limit the effectiveness of its application across the Diocese.

**Recommendation D25:** The DBF should proactively raise awareness of the dispute resolution pathway across the Diocese.

- 6.16 The DSO receives appropriate professional supervision through a structured process. Previously, the DSO's casework was discussed in one-on-one supervision sessions with a dedicated professional supervisor. This helped to ensure proper case management, policy adherence, and professional development. Looking ahead, with the appointment of a Regional Safeguarding Lead (RSL), the professional supervision of all casework will transition to the RSL. As with other areas, the RSL will be responsible for providing direct supervision to the DSO. Importantly, this engagement should accrue all the benefits of a secure supervisory relationship for the DSO, alongside providing opportunities for the RSL to quality assure their work.

- 6.17 For data handling, information is securely shared via email where appropriate to do so.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://durhamdiocese.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-governance/>

DBF staff utilise the iHASCO training platform, where the 'GDPR UK Essentials' module is available. While DBF staff and senior non-parish clergy receive secure email addresses from the DBF, parishes manage their own email systems, often resulting in volunteers using personal accounts.

- 6.18 During the Audit, a challenging situation emerged concerning a PSO who had passed away without next of kin. Their personal laptop contained a range of sensitive safeguarding records, including DBS renewal dates of individuals and other confidential safeguarding material. The DBF encountered significant difficulties in accessing the laptop to retrieve this information.

**Recommendation D26:** The DBF should rapidly review the arrangements in place covering secure and accessible data management at a parish level. This should include a review of the guidance, equipment and technical solutions available to PSOs to undertake their safeguarding functions.

**Recommendation D27:** Notwithstanding the review of the arrangements in place, the DBF should advise all parishes that PSOs (and any other parish staff and volunteers handling sensitive data) should adopt a policy stipulating that confidential safeguarding records should not be stored on personal devices.

**Recommendation D28:** To mitigate risks associated with unforeseen circumstances such as the passing of a PSO, the DBF should develop and enact a comprehensive data succession plan. This plan should clearly outline:

- **Designated Access:** Who has authorised access to safeguarding records in the event of a PSO's incapacitation or departure (i.e. the DSO / DST)
- **Secure Handovers:** A formal process for the secure handover of all safeguarding data and associated access credentials when a PSO leaves their role.
- **Emergency Access Procedures:** Clearly defined procedures for gaining urgent access to vital safeguarding information in an emergency, including relevant technical support.

**Recommendation D29:** To ensure compliance and reinforce best practice, the DBF should:

- Conduct regular audits of data storage practices across all parishes to ensure adherence to the new protocols.
- Encourage ongoing training for all PSOs and relevant personnel on data protection, secure data storage, and the established data succession plan. This training should emphasise the critical importance of safeguarding sensitive information and the potential risks of non-compliance.

6.19 In respect of the DST's management of phone calls from distressed callers, this is an area where the Audit also believes that the existing guidance and support could be strengthened. See Recommendation D33.

**Recommendation D30:** All members of the DST who may receive calls from distressed individuals should undergo training in:

- **Trauma-Informed Practice:** Understanding the impact of trauma on individuals and responding in a way that avoids re-traumatisation.

- **Mental Health First Aid / Awareness:** Basic understanding of common mental health conditions and how to support individuals experiencing a mental health crisis.
- **Suicide Awareness and Intervention:** Training on recognising signs of suicidal ideation and appropriate intervention strategies (e.g., signposting to crisis lines).
- **Difficult Conversations and Conflict Resolution:** Skills for navigating challenging conversations and managing potential conflict.

## 7 Victims and Survivors

- 7.1 For many victims and survivors, living with the abuse they have suffered can be profoundly traumatic. Disclosing this to others can be an incredibly difficult experience. Individuals may feel overwhelmed by the processes involved, the potential for re-traumatisation or anxieties about potential outcomes. Recognising this, it is crucial that Church bodies create and maintain a nurturing environment that enables victims and survivors to feel heard, supported and protected, whilst also learning from their experiences.
- 7.2 In evaluating the DBF's response to this key standard of safeguarding practice, the Audit obtained feedback from victims and survivors from across the Diocese via an anonymous online survey. The Audit was also able to conduct 1-1 discussions with victims and survivors to listen to their individual experiences.
- 7.3 The DBF adheres to the House of Bishop's policy, 'Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse' and reinforces this commitment with a dedicated statement on its 'Support for Survivors and Victims' webpage. Explainer videos about this guidance (which were produced nationally in co-production with victims and survivors) are embedded on the diocesan website<sup>6</sup> and there is appropriate reference in the safeguarding e-manual. While these are certainly good practices, most respondents to the Audit's victim / survivor survey were unaware of this guidance. Furthermore, there was uncertainty amongst them as to whether it would have made a difference had it been in place when they reported their abuse.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.durhamdiocese.org/safeguarding/support-for-survivors-and-victims/>

- 7.4 The Diocesan website's 'Report Abuse' webpage serves as a central repository of contact information for key contacts, including the DSO, the police and local contacts for adults and children's social care. A comprehensive list of national services helps to ensure that individuals have access to a wide range of support options. These include Hourglass, Samaritans, NSPCC, NAPAC, Stop It Now and the Survivors Trust. This information is also downloadable directly from the 'Report Abuse' webpage. This is good practice. That said, given that mental health is a common safeguarding theme, signposting to relevant local services should also be included.

**Recommendation D31:** The DBF should further enhance its 'Report Abuse' webpage by incorporating direct signposts to local mental health services within the Durham region, e.g. the Mental Health Alliance.

- 7.5 The Audit noted the thoughtful and logical presentation of support options, allowing individuals to easily choose based on their specific needs. For those seeking to talk to someone, Safe Spaces and the Diocese of Durham counselling service are signposted. Individuals requiring broader support can access Safe Spaces, support persons, spiritual and pastoral support, and the Interim Support Scheme (ISS). The Audit also noted the provision made available for those seeking an apology and clear signposting to independent support services for individuals who prefer not to directly contact the DBF. All this information has been collated into a leaflet which is downloadable on the 'Support for Survivors and Victims' webpage. This was co-produced with a representative from a victim and survivor organisation, Darlington and County Durham Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre (RSACC) and consulted upon with a victim and survivor.

- 7.6 The DSO consistently advocates for trauma-informed processes, evident in their efforts to integrate survivor perspectives into theological discernment and facilitate cross-

denominational support for individuals dissatisfied with prior institutional responses. This commitment underscores a victim-centred approach, prioritising the autonomy and needs of those who have experienced harm.

- 7.7 The DSO's intuitive and compassionate communication style is highly valued and appreciated. However, establishing a more structured and diarised system for 'check-ins' with victims and survivors is likely to accrue benefits. The Audit understands that the DSO's role can often be fluid, which can make maintaining predictability challenging. Nevertheless, a defined schedule for these check-ins would help manage expectations more effectively and reinforce the DSO's approach and commitment towards trauma-informed practice.

<p><b>Recommendation D32:</b> The DSO should schedule check-in points for victims and survivors, to create defined and diarised opportunities to engage with them.</p>
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- 7.8 The Audit identified a range of evidence demonstrating members of the DBF responding to individuals in a supportive, trauma-informed and practical manner. A Safeguarding Telephone Guidance document outlines how staff should respond to potential disclosures in the DSO's absence. This guidance covers scenarios and recommended actions, while also offering support and guidance to the recipient of the call. There is evidence of a trauma-informed approach in this guidance, with its focus on ensuring agency, engaging with empathy and reassurance, facilitating trust and managing expectations on confidentiality. Whilst a valuable document, the Audit sees an opportunity to make some small, yet important, improvements.



**Recommendation D33:** The DBF should strengthen its safeguarding telephone guidance for those receiving disclosures by incorporating a trauma-informed approach. This should include:

- Providing a clear explanation of the importance of a trauma-informed approach.
- Setting out how disclosures from potential victims and survivors may vary significantly based on their individual experiences.
- Clear steps for assessing the caller's immediate safety and risk level and the actions to take in an emergency.
- Guidance on using empathetic language, active listening techniques, and non-judgmental responses.
- Strategies for calming distressed callers and managing potentially volatile conversations.
- Guidance covering the local and national support services available to which distressed callers can be signposted.
- Clear instructions on maintaining confidentiality while adhering to safeguarding and data protection regulations.
- Guidance on maintaining professional boundaries and managing personal emotional impact.
- Protocols for concluding calls in a way that leaves the caller feeling supported and informed of next steps.
- Guidance on the support available via debriefs / supervision with managers, peer support mechanisms, and access to Employee Assistance.

7.9 In terms of other good practice identified by the Audit, the acting Diocesan Bishop was noted as having personally engaged with a victim / survivor of abuse, ensuring their views were appropriately heard by the Redress Project Team. Other senior leaders have been proactive in securing financial compensation and have actively considered

recommendations linked to victims / survivors derived from national safeguarding reviews. The DSO was also noted as having directly engaged with victims / survivors in efforts to strengthen their influence in how safeguarding practice can be developed locally.

- 7.10 A representative of the RSACC currently represents victim and survivor voices, with this support being secured via a contract with the DBF. A victim / survivor also sits on the DSAP, although the DSAP acknowledges there is scope to improve engagement within its meetings and activities. Overall, the Audit recognises that a broad range of victim / survivor voices should be heard to help develop strategy and practice. The following recommendation is made in this regard.

**Recommendation D34:** The DBF should partner with the Cathedral to host Diocese-wide listening events, expanding the platform to hear from diverse voices that can help to shape local safeguarding strategy and practice. Such initiatives require careful execution, ensuring active listening, appropriate responses, and effective awareness-raising.

## 8 Learning, Supervision and Support

### Learning and Safeguarding Training Provision

- 8.1 The DBF is committed to promoting a safeguarding learning culture and this is reflected in local activity. The safeguarding training offer is broad, consistent, and contextually tailored to reflect the needs of the parish communities across the Diocese. A core team of clergy and safeguarding professionals lead on training delivery, effectively using their combined experience, practical insight and lived contextual knowledge. Most sessions are co-delivered, which supports observation, mentoring and consistency. This good practice is emerging nationally and positions the DBF strongly in terms of trainer development and quality assurance.
- 8.2 The DBF has a training strategy that adheres to the CofE's national framework. A balanced blend of online and in-person courses are available and content is contextualised to reflect emerging diocesan needs, with adaptations made where necessary to support understanding and application. The training team operate a peer debrief system and maintain a feedback loop with the SSO, who monitors themes in both pre-course and post-course materials. This triangulated oversight has resulted in appropriate responses to concerns, including safeguarding disclosures, poor-quality pre-course responses, and signs of distress during sessions. This is good practice.
- 8.3 The DSO maintains active involvement in both delivery and debriefs. This ensures visibility and reinforces their understanding of the local context. There is evidence that this approach supports responsive learning and adjustment, particularly in surfacing shifts in clergy understanding and confidence. For example, trainers have observed a focus by participants beyond child-only perceptions of safeguarding towards a broader

understanding that encompasses adult safeguarding and organisational culture. That said, a consistent mechanism for assessing the impact of training remains underdeveloped.

- 8.4 Indeed, while anecdotal feedback is strong, there is no structured approach to evaluating how training shapes practice over time.

**Recommendation D35:** The DBF should explore a proportionate, Diocese-wide evaluation process for safeguarding training that evidences impact and is focused on confidence, behavioural change, and culture.

### Clergy Support

- 8.5 The DBF has a long-standing commitment to clergy learning and safeguarding development. Safeguarding training for new incumbents and clergy with Permission To Officiate (PTO) is well embedded, and compliance is routinely monitored.
- 8.6 The DSO's continued delivery role offers clergy the opportunity to build familiarity and trust, and clergy feedback reflects an increased openness to safeguarding as part of their ministry. This marks a notable shift from earlier years, when resistance to training was more prevalent.
- 8.7 There is a clear commitment to offering clergy psychologically safe spaces, especially when navigating the personal and emotional challenges of ministry. The DBF offers a confidential clergy counselling service, managed by a part-time counselling lead with a background in NHS psychological support. Clergy can self-refer or be signposted into the service via the DST or other diocesan pathways. This arrangement is flexible, with provision for extended support (beyond the standard ten sessions) where clinically appropriate.

## **Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) Induction and Support**

8.8 PSO induction is supported through tailored guidance, regional events, and one-to-one advice from the DST. Despite these offers, there are ongoing challenges in recruiting and retaining PSOs. Some clergy are currently covering the PSO role themselves - an arrangement recognised by Church leaders as unsustainable in the long term.

8.9 The DBF has taken proactive steps to support PSOs with the Safeguarding Dashboard, including developing accessible guidance and offering follow-up support. However, the Audit identified opportunities to further strengthen engagement and support, particularly in areas with persistent compliance gaps.

**Recommendation D36:** The DBF should enhance support to PSOs by expanding accessible peer learning opportunities and introducing targeted micro-training or drop-in forums, particularly in high-need or low-capacity parishes.

## **Supervision and Support of Safeguarding Roles**

8.10 The DSO accesses structured supervision, with reflective practice models. Peer support is strengthened through the Safeguarding Management Group, chaired by the Archdeacon of Auckland, and regular collaboration with the Diocese of Carlisle on shared training issues. The DBF is also represented in national and regional safeguarding networks which is reflected in their ability to align with wider developments.

## 9 Conclusion

- 9.1 The DBF is taking a robust and proactive approach to safeguarding, underpinned by a clear commitment to develop a sense of psychological safety. Many individuals reported feeling confident in raising safeguarding concerns without fear of reprisal, indicating a growing sense that safeguarding is becoming deeply embedded in practice. This positive trajectory is further supported by the dedication of Parish Safeguarding Officers, the Diocesan Board of Finance's desire for continuous improvement, and the compassionate leadership from the Acting Diocesan Bishop, the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, and the wider senior team. All of this points towards an appropriate level of optimism for the future trajectory of safeguarding within and across the Diocese.
- 9.2 Operationally, the DBF demonstrates considerable strengths across several key areas. There is good training and support for Parish Safeguarding Officers, who serve on the frontline of Church safeguarding, effective safer recruitment processes, good use of the Parish Dashboard and active promotion of awareness-raising activities. Partnership working is good and enhanced by the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer's proactive engagement in external safeguarding groups.
- 9.3 The Audit also identified evidence of good risk management and the sensible application of low thresholds, encouraging early reporting and engagement. Safety Plans are effectively and proportionately applied, and Safeguarding Case Management Groups are effectively utilised for complex cases.
- 9.4 Victim and survivor support is thoughtfully addressed, with the diocesan website's 'Report Abuse' webpage serving as a comprehensive central hub for clear and logically presented

contact information and support options. The co-production of victim / survivor leaflets is a particular strength, and the Audit saw and heard evidence of the DSO advocating for and delivering trauma-informed processes and responses to disclosures.

- 9.5 Several areas could be further developed and strengthened. These include refining governance and oversight, improving case recording, and enhancing victim and survivor support by formalising check-in procedures and broadening opportunities to hear from victims and survivors. Additionally, challenges regarding PSO recruitment and retention need to be addressed.
- 9.6 The foundation for these and other improvements is directly linked to the current capacity, or lack thereof, in providing professional safeguarding support. This issue needs immediate attention as it has the potential to impact the ongoing safeguarding improvement efforts and is central to many of the areas addressed in the Audit report recommendations.
- 9.7 The Audit is in no doubt that by adopting these recommendations the DBF and the parishes they support will further strengthen their safeguarding arrangements and build upon the considerable progress they have made.

# Part Two - Durham Cathedral



## 10 Context

- 10.1 Durham Cathedral, a place of worship from the late tenth-century, saw its main construction begin in 1093. After the Norman Conquest, it functioned as both a Benedictine monastery and the seat of the Bishop of Durham, a role it maintained after the Reformation despite the dissolution of the monastery.
- 10.2 Historically, Durham Cathedral has held considerable importance for the communities in the North-East, maintaining strong links to the region's industrial and coal mining heritage. Many of its clergy have prominently advocated for social reform, particularly on behalf of disadvantaged people. The Cathedral also founded a university in the city in 1832, becoming only the third university in England at that time.
- 10.3 Formerly known as the Cathedral Church of Christ, Blessed Mary the Virgin and St Cuthbert of Durham, the Cathedral is located in the relatively small city of Durham, which has a total population of 23,175. In 2024, the Cathedral welcomed an average of 7,500 visitors per week.
- 10.4 Shaped by its past two centuries, the Cathedral now serves a post-industrial community that is undergoing steady regeneration. The public sector remains a key employer, and low-skilled jobs are over-represented in the local employment market. Durham City exhibits distinct socio-educational disparities among its residents, with Durham University significantly influencing specific areas and contributing to a professional and academic population.
- 10.5 Durham Cathedral has a mixed choir with boys and girls from the Cathedral school, as well

as adult singers. It also includes a Junior Consort for older children and Durham Cathedral Young Singers, which offers classes for children of various ages from any school.

## 11 Progress

- 11.1 The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) audit of Durham Cathedral, published in August 2021, resulted in 20 ‘considerations’. It was also included in the Diocesan Past Cases Review 2 (PCR2) process, although no specific recommendations were made for the Cathedral.
- 11.2 The Cathedral accepted all SCIE audit considerations, and the Audit heard that a dedicated action plan was monitored and updated by the Cathedral Strategic Safeguarding Group, with Chapter having full oversight and scrutiny. This plan was reportedly overseen to completion. The current Chief Operating Officer (COO) assumed responsibility for the plan and has since evaluated its relevance and progress, with the Operational Health and Safety Group (a standing committee) conducting the most recent review.
- 11.3 The Cathedral has also participated in a range of learning initiatives, including a Lessons Learned Review (LLR) in 2016 concerning non-recent abuse at the Durham Cathedral Chorister School. This review led to several recommendations, some of which have been superseded by changes to the Cathedral School's structure. The remaining relevant recommendations have since been addressed, although the employment of a dedicated Cathedral Safeguarding Officer (CSO) was noted as having been affected by staffing changes. A subsequent LLR was carried out in 2024 regarding an allegation against a volunteer. The Cathedral examined the management of this incident and considered the lessons learned to inform future procedures.

## 12 Culture, Leadership and Capacity

### Culture

- 12.1 The Audit observed the Dean's proactive efforts to dismantle clerical exceptionalism and embed accountability within the Cathedral's culture. These efforts have led to some significant changes, including mandatory annual clergy reviews, a process the Dean also undergoes. This activity has helped to foster an environment where feedback is freely given and received, power dynamics are challenged, and the 'deference gap' addressed through welcoming challenging conversations. Evidence suggests that whilst there is still work to be done, the application of this approach is gaining traction.
- 12.2 An overwhelming majority of the Cathedral's workforce and worshipping community who participated in the Audit survey reported feeling safe within its environment, describing it as welcoming and respectful. However, a divergence in perceptions regarding safeguarding improvements was apparent between the two groups. A significant majority of workforce respondents reported tangible improvements in overall safeguarding measures, expressing confidence that these were becoming embedded in practice and that they were confident they could raise concerns without fear of reprisal. The worshipping community, however, presented a more nuanced perspective. While most aligned with the views expressed by the workforce, a significant minority reported being either unsure or neutral. That said, closer scrutiny of the survey responses revealed that this minority largely comprised those who only occasionally visited and worshipped at the Cathedral.
- 12.3 This disparity in perception indicates that although internal efforts to enhance safeguarding have instilled confidence within the workforce, continued efforts are required to raise awareness and reassure those who worship at the Cathedral.

- 12.4 Triangulation of feedback from one-to-one discussions and focus groups evidenced that those working in the Cathedral as volunteers, vergers and clergy were all committed to constructively operating a safeguarding first approach and that they were endeavouring to reassure those who worship there.

**Recommendation C1:** To bridge the current perception gap, provide greater clarity, and build confidence in safeguarding practices among worshippers, especially occasional worshippers, the Cathedral should implement a targeted communication strategy. This strategy should evidence safeguarding improvements and actively encourage questions and the reporting of any concerns.

1. This communication strategy should involve multi-faceted engagement, including:

- Regular, prominent updates on safeguarding initiatives via weekly notices, the Cathedral website, and dedicated information sessions. These updates should highlight specific improvements and the ‘safeguarding first’ commitment of staff, volunteers, and clergy.
- Reinforce easily identifiable points of contact for safeguarding concerns. This should include the introduction of the CSA/O once appointed.
- Opportunities for direct dialogue, such as ‘meet the safeguarding team’ (new CSA/O) events or Q&A sessions, allowing worshippers to engage directly on any issues they may wish to clarify.
- Measurement of effectiveness will be crucial. This should include:
  - Follow-up surveys with the worshipping community (e.g., annually or bi-annually) to track shifts in neutrality / uncertainty regarding safeguarding.

- Monitoring the reporting of concerns and contacts with staff and volunteers related to safeguarding.
- Analysis of qualitative feedback from one-to-one discussions and focus groups, to gauge the ongoing sense of safeguarding awareness within the worshipping community and their understanding of pathways to help.
- Regular outcome reporting to leadership and Chapter meetings.

## Leadership

12.5 The Dean holds ultimate responsibility and accountability for safeguarding across the Cathedral. He thoughtfully integrates his understanding of both the challenges and opportunities regarding safeguarding practice into his role, effectively utilising and sharing his deep insight into these matters, which is built from his own lived experience. The Dean is a significant asset to safeguarding within the Cathedral and potentially beyond. The Audit will therefore write to the National Safeguarding Team (NST), encouraging them to consider how they might best engage with, listen to, and learn from his extensive experience and understanding of safeguarding in the context of the Church.

12.6 As a leader, the Audit saw and heard credible evidence of the Dean's authoritative decision-making, pastoral care, and the positive impact he is making by driving a 'safeguarding first' philosophy. This commitment is clearly reflected in his senior leadership team.

12.7 The Cathedral's senior leadership team includes a highly capable and motivated Canon Precentor and a safeguarding-focused Canon Pastor, who also serves as the Chapter Safeguarding Lead (CSL). The Audit views this organisational model as good practice, as

it effectively separates the day-to-day management of safeguarding in historically high-risk areas, such as the music department (including choristers), from safeguarding oversight and scrutiny.

- 12.8 The Audit also observed evidence regarding the positive impact of other senior leaders. This included the work of the Chief Operating Officer (COO), who was credited with helping to shift the organisational culture from one previously marked by financial anxiety and insecurity to one that is now more purpose driven. This change, in the opinion of the Audit, has facilitated the necessary capacity to look more broadly at other issues, thereby indirectly encouraging a healthier safeguarding environment.

#### **Chapter Safeguarding Lead (CSL) and Cathedral Safeguarding Advisor / Officer (CSA/O)**

- 12.9 Whilst the Chapter Safeguarding Lead (CSL) was found to possess a solid understanding of safeguarding and demonstrated significant safeguarding insights, skills, and abilities, the absence of a dedicated Cathedral Safeguarding Advisor / Officer (CSA/O) has represented a potential vulnerability. The Audit therefore welcomes the commitment to appoint a CSA/O. This appointment will undoubtedly enhance safeguarding by clearly dividing responsibilities between Chapter oversight (via the CSL) and day-to-day operational delivery within the Cathedral. Furthermore, the appointment will strengthen the Cathedral's ability to collaborate effectively with the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) when complex situations, extractions, or operational contingencies arise.

- 12.10 The Dean maintains an excellent working relationship with the Bishop and together, they have a valuable opportunity to enable closer collaboration on safeguarding matters across both the DBF and the Cathedral as they move forward.

## **Governance**

12.11 The Cathedral operates its governance and oversight meetings in line with the expectations of the CofE and other relevant requirements, including those issued by the Charity Commission. The Audit found evidence from various stakeholders highlighting strengths in the composition and operation of the Cathedral Chapter. Notably, the shared leadership and chairing function between the Dean and the Senior Non-Executive Member (SNEM) is seen as good practice. This approach ensures balance, opportunities for thoughtful reflection, and a robust mechanism for managing potential conflicts of interest. The SNEM also plays a role in setting and monitoring the Dean's personal objectives.

12.12 A review of Chapter minutes indicates that safeguarding is a consistent feature of each meeting. While key areas receive meaningful briefings, discussion, and consideration, a greater focus on authoritative scrutiny could lead to deeper insights, thereby enhancing assurance regarding safeguarding policy and practice. This could be supported by further developing the Cathedral Strategic Safeguarding Group (SSG) to prioritise key issues and alert the Chapter to existing or potential strategic safeguarding concerns.

## **Cathedral Strategic Safeguarding Committee**

12.13 The Durham Cathedral Strategic Safeguarding Committee (SSC), now led by an independent Chair, provides strategic oversight for all safeguarding matters. Its core functions include reviewing and developing safeguarding policies and procedures, ensuring adherence to National Safeguarding Standards (NSS) and best practices, identifying and managing potential risks, fostering a robust safeguarding culture through dedicated training, and implementing recommendations from national reports and audits. Moving forward, oversight and governance could be strengthened by synchronising the focus of safeguarding within Chapter's agenda, adopting a three-year themed approach to



scrutinising National Safeguarding Standards, and aligning reporting expectations from the Chapter to the Charity Commission.

12.14 Furthermore, upon the appointment of a CSA/O, consideration should be given to establishing an operational sub-group. This group would be chaired by the CSA/O and comprise staff and volunteers who deliver day-to-day safeguarding. Its focus would be on operational safeguarding matters, with a responsibility to escalate any potential strategic issues to the SSG.

12.15 The addition of an operational sub-group will also ensure that safeguarding activity is aligned from operational engagement to the SSC and onwards to Chapter. To ensure clarity of purpose regarding the relationship between these governance and oversight bodies, the operational sub-group (in conjunction with others) should produce a process map or similar tool that differentiates their responsibilities and sets out escalation pathways.

12.16 The Cathedral should:

**Recommendation C2:** Synchronise SSG focus with Chapter Governance: Align the SSG's focus, activities, and themes directly with the Chapter's strategic agenda.

**Recommendation C3:** Implement Themed Scrutiny: Adopt a three-year themed approach for scrutinising National Safeguarding Standards, ensuring alignment of reporting across governance and oversight bodies and with Charity Commission expectations.

**Recommendation C4:** Enhance DSAP Collaboration: Engage in structured collaboration with the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP), potentially through a joint annual meeting or event focused on key themes and continuous improvement.

**Recommendation C5:** Diversify SSC Membership: Conduct inclusion, diversity, and skills audits for the SSC to ensure the broadest possible membership. This should include, for example, leads from local charities, to bring in diverse perspectives and expertise.

**Recommendation C6:** Clarify governance and oversight responsibilities: To ensure clarity of purpose regarding the relationship between these governance and oversight bodies, the operational sub-group (in conjunction with others) should produce a process map or similar tool that differentiates their responsibilities and sets out escalation pathways.

**Recommendation C7:** Establish an Operational Safeguarding Sub-Group: Upon the appointment of a CSA/O, establish an operational sub-group chaired by the CSA/O. This group, comprising staff and volunteers involved in day-to-day safeguarding, will manage operational matters and escalate any strategic issues to the main Safeguarding Group.

**Recommendation C8:** Independent Chair Presence at Chapter Meetings: While the SSC provides an annual update to the Chapter, consideration should be given to inviting the Independent Chair to all Chapter meetings to support the work of the Cathedral Safeguarding Lead (CSL) and act as a critical friend when considering safeguarding or related matters.

## **Safeguarding Capacity at the Cathedral**

12.17 The Audit welcomes the recruitment of a dedicated CSA/O, as this will enhance the depth

of support available across various roles within the Cathedral. In line with the recommendations in the first part of this report, the Audit makes the following recommendations:

**Recommendation C9:** Professional Supervision for CSA/O: While the CSA/O should be located in and dedicated to safeguarding across the Cathedral, they should be professionally supervised by the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) as part of the wider Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST).

12.18 This approach aligns with the Audit's national recommendation for the strategic restructuring of safeguarding functions across the geography of the Diocese, as detailed in the Independent Safeguarding Audits 2024/2025 Annual Report.

**Recommendation C10:** Establish a Dedicated Safeguarding Directorate: Work with the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) to establish a dedicated Safeguarding Directorate under the leadership of a professional Director of Safeguarding.

## Chorister Safeguarding

12.19 As with all Audits, every effort has been made to ensure the findings are evidence-based, triangulated, and tested for validity prior to publication. During the Audit of Durham Cathedral, the team received a wide range of views - including a particularly mixed set of responses from parents. The report aims to provide a fair and balanced analysis in this respect, highlighting notable gaps and areas for improvement as well as clear strengths and examples of effective practice.

12.20 Some information submitted to the Audit concerning choristers, falls outside the scope of the Audit's Terms of Reference. These matters will be addressed separately with the

Cathedral in an accompanying document.

## **Context**

12.21 Durham Cathedral choristers are drawn from Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation (DCSF), formed through the merger of the former Durham Chorister School and Durham School. Choristers attend the Foundation's school site and have the option to board during the school week, with boarding being a requirement during designated chorister periods outside of term time.

12.22 In many respects, safeguarding arrangements for choristers are well developed and supported by close working relationships between Cathedral and school staff. All staff engaged by the Audit spoke with clarity, confidence and care about their roles.

## **Parental Confidence and Chorister Voice**

12.23 Choristers interviewed during the Audit overwhelmingly described feeling safe, supported, and well cared for. They trust the staff surrounding them, and many articulated a clear understanding of what to do if they felt worried. Their views suggest a safeguarding culture that is embedded in daily practice and reinforced by visible adult support.

12.24 However, parental feedback was significantly more divided. Families whose children became a chorister after the school merger, reported higher satisfaction and confidence in the current safeguarding arrangements. In contrast, longer-standing parents raised detailed, persistent concerns, including repeated breakdowns in communication and parental consent, a lack of structured mechanisms for feedback or working in partnership, issues around fee transparency and governance, dismissive responses to concerns, and a lack of accountability for earlier failures.

12.25 These concerns were well evidenced and have remained unresolved for several years.

While they may not reflect current safeguarding risks in operational terms, they have a material impact on trust, family engagement, and perceptions of safeguarding competence among some chorister parents. At their core, they highlight a failure of relational safeguarding - one that the Cathedral has demonstrated an awareness of and is seeking to repair.

12.26 The Audit recognises the Cathedral's ongoing commitment to safeguarding, and acknowledges the recent steps taken to improve parent engagement, including formalising routes for parental feedback. However, accountability for past issues remains an important step in restoring trust. A culture of openness, humility, and willingness to learn from difficult feedback will be essential to repairing relationships with some families and reinforcing the credibility of safeguarding leadership. See Recommendation C12 below.

### **Communication and Information Sharing**

12.27 Formal information sharing between the Cathedral and DCSF is embedded through weekly meetings attended by key pastoral, safeguarding, and music staff. These meetings support co-ordinated oversight of chorister wellbeing, and Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) from both institutions are well known and accessible to staff.

12.28 However, feedback from some parents highlighted recurring concerns about the quality and timeliness of communication. Several outlined patterns of late, incomplete, or unclear information, particularly regarding trips and changes to routine. While this can be challenging for any family to navigate, it is particularly difficult for children with neurodivergence and their families, who may require greater predictability, detail, and time to prepare for changes. The Cathedral has since taken steps to address these

issues, including longer lead-in times for trips and improved consideration of individual needs. The Audit welcomes these changes and encourages continued attention to proactive, accessible communication.

**Recommendation C11:** The Cathedral should continue to strengthen its communication and engagement with chorister families by developing structured opportunities for listening, feedback, and collaborative problem-solving. This should include timely, accessible communication about activities and changes, active consideration of the needs of neurodiverse children, and an approach rooted in relational safeguarding - one that values transparency, accountability, and the repair of trust where it has previously been impacted.

12.29 Some parents also expressed uncertainty around who holds safeguarding responsibility when choristers are engaged in Cathedral activities. Whilst there are a range of policies and handbooks available with explicit reference to staff, their roles, and how to contact them, a clearer delineation of duties between school and the Cathedral would be beneficial for clarity and ownership.

**Recommendation C12:** The Cathedral should produce a clear explanation of safeguarding responsibilities during Cathedral-led chorister activities, including which organisation (DCSF or the Cathedral) the responsibility sits with. This should include those activities taking place during the school day and should be shared with families as part of regular safeguarding communications.

## Scheduling and Wellbeing

12.30 The scheduling of chorister commitments is co-ordinated closely between the Cathedral and DCSF, with a view to balancing musical expectations and children's overall wellbeing. Auditors found that while the schedule is busy, it is thoughtfully managed. Staff across both institutions demonstrated awareness of choristers' wider academic and pastoral needs, with evidence that adjustments are made during particularly demanding periods such as Holy Week and Advent. The Director of Music adjusts rehearsal schedules to incorporate breaks. This is good practice.

## Safeguarding Training and Awareness

12.31 All music staff have completed safeguarding training and can demonstrate high levels of safeguarding awareness. There appears to be a culture of daily vigilance and appropriate recording of low-level concerns. Supervisors reported confidence in the escalation routes and an understanding of thresholds for DSL referrals. The culture of openness within the music team is notable. Staff spoke positively about discussing concerns collaboratively, welcoming challenge, and reflecting together on potential safeguarding issues, even when incidents are minor or ambiguous.

12.32 Some positive references were made to participation in behaviour management training previously delivered by DCSF, although this has not been routine. Given the shared supervision responsibilities across school and Cathedral contexts, and the fast-paced nature of chorister schedules, scope remains for embedding this training more consistently.

**Recommendation C13:** The Cathedral should explore opportunities for music and supervisory staff to access behaviour management training aligned with the approach of DCSF. This will help to ensure consistency of expectation, confidence in shared spaces and

responding to pupil behaviour. Sessions should also include training on working effectively with neurodiverse children.

## Environmental Safeguarding and Physical Space

12.33 Physical safeguarding arrangements at the Cathedral are largely sound. Dedicated chorister toilets are available, building works are managed sensitively, and safeguarding posters are placed at child height. Once complete, the Cathedral plans to install similar posters in all toilet areas and the new song room.

12.34 CCTV coverage requires further attention. The system in the organ loft is currently non-functional, and thoughtful installation is needed in changing-adjacent areas in the new Song School. Planning is underway, and the Cathedral appears alert to the need to balance visibility with privacy.

**Recommendation C14:** The Cathedral should prioritise the restoration of non-operational CCTV systems in key chorister areas, such as the organ loft, and ensure that new installations in the Song School are implemented in consultation with safeguarding staff, with appropriate consideration of both safeguarding and privacy.

## Chaperoning

12.35 Chorister supervision is consistent, planned, and generally robust. A termly rota ensures that at least two trained and DBS-checked adults are present at rehearsals and services. The Director of Music has implemented structured rehearsal reviews and maintains close contact with the school's DSL, enabling effective tracking of emerging concerns. Patterns or low-level issues can be raised informally and formally through these channels.



12.36 While the current level of supervision is appropriate, Auditors noted that it relies significantly on school staff. Although the Cathedral expressed confidence in these arrangements, a review may be beneficial (particularly considering any future changes to school boarding staffing) to ensure long-term sustainability.

**Recommendation C15:** The Cathedral should review its current chaperoning model to assess the balance of responsibility between school and Cathedral staff and consider increasing Cathedral-led capacity to ensure continuity and resilience in supervision arrangements over time.

## 13 Prevention

- 13.1 Durham Cathedral effectively supports safer recruitment through its established policies and procedures. As an example, a range of checks are undertaken to ensure the suitability of applicants such as references, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and confidential declaration forms for eligible roles. Arrangements are also in place that provide relevant messaging on recruitment information packs, coherent role descriptions, clear interview processes and training for those involved in the recruitment process. All these measures help to create an environment that deters those who might be unsuitable or pose a risk from working in the Cathedral.
- 13.2 The Cathedral ensures safeguarding is a regular and meaningful topic of discussion across all levels of its community. For its leadership, safeguarding is a standing item on the Executive Leadership Team agenda and is a frequent topic at staff briefings. Volunteers are kept informed through daily briefings with Visitor Experience (VE) volunteers at the start of each shift and at Lead Volunteer meetings.
- 13.3 The importance of safeguarding is also consistently highlighted to the wider congregation. A safeguarding notice is included in every order of service produced by the Cathedral, as well as in externally produced orders of service. This year, safeguarding has been mentioned four times in sermons, and regular worshippers are encouraged to engage with the 'Pillars of Hope' initiative during National Safeguarding Week. Crucially, the CSO or CSL meets with choristers once a term to reinforce safeguarding procedures. Furthermore, specific groups like the bellringers include safeguarding on the agenda for their Annual General Meeting (AGM), and all officers are required to have safeguarding information on their lanyards before climbing the tower. Finally, a dedicated safeguarding noticeboard in

the cloisters provides essential information to all visitors, demonstrating a comprehensive and proactive approach to safeguarding.

- 13.4 The Cathedral actively cultivates and shares good safeguarding practice, fundamentally adhering to the CofE's comprehensive House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy, 'Promoting a Safer Church'. This commitment is underpinned by a robust partnership with the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF), where the DSO is consulted by default on all safeguarding cases, ensuring a valuable, external professional perspective. Regular engagement between the Cathedral's Chapter Lead, the Dean, the DSO, and the CSO is supported by Service Level Agreements and shared senior leadership training. This develops a collaborative environment that encourages constructive challenge from both sides. Furthermore, Durham Cathedral proactively engages with other cathedrals, benefiting from their expertise and experiences.
- 13.5 A variety of materials and methods are used by the Cathedral to promote safeguarding throughout its community. A dedicated safeguarding noticeboard in the cloisters is prominently displayed, serving as a visible point of information for all. This noticeboard highlights safeguarding information, contact details of the safeguarding team, national safeguarding standards, and contact details for support organisations, police, emergency services, and other relevant agencies. To ensure immediate access to support, all staff and volunteers are equipped with cards outlining key safeguarding contact points and are required to always wear or have their lanyards readily available. Regular staff and volunteer briefings provide opportunities for direct communication and reinforcement of safeguarding messages. Furthermore, the Cathedral leverages its communication channels by including safeguarding information in social media, pastoral letters, and all service sheets, thereby reaching a broad audience of stakeholders. Finally, the Cathedral's

webpages serve as a comprehensive online resource, offering accessible information and further promoting awareness of safeguarding policies and procedures.

- 13.6 The Cathedral has actively raised awareness of various safeguarding issues, including faith-based abuse, through an exhibition. The Cathedral also addresses homelessness via its 'Warm Spaces' initiative and a Christmas appeal with Sanctuary 21. Furthermore, it highlights domestic, elder, and child abuse through noticeboards and its website, directing individuals to specialist support organisations.
- 13.7 The Cathedral's website hosts strong safeguarding webpages, offering an accessible and informative resource for the community. A dedicated safeguarding landing page, easily reachable via a prominent shortcut from the homepage, serves as a central hub. This page comprehensively sets out a range of safeguarding information, key contact details and outlines the national safeguarding standards. The webpages are designed for an easy-to-navigate experience, presenting information hierarchically and with details readily accessible.
- 13.8 Durham Cathedral is proactively refining its safeguarding prevention planning to ensure children's voices are heard. While Junior Church hasn't explicitly covered safeguarding with its young attendees in the past, plans are now in place to do so. This initiative is supported by the Audit, with the relevant section of Part One of this report providing further detail and a recommendation in this respect.
- 13.9 Importantly, the Cathedral recognises the needs of vulnerable adults and survivors of abuse, ensuring their experiences inform its safeguarding arrangements. This is addressed further in the Victims and Survivors section of this report.

- 13.10 The Cathedral is committed to ensuring the safety of its staff, volunteers, and visitors. To meet this commitment, it thoroughly reviewed its risk assessment process in 2024. Consequently, all line managers received comprehensive training to ensure a consistent approach to identifying and reducing risks.
- 13.11 The Cathedral employs three types of risk assessments. Department-Specific Risk Assessments cover daily operations. For less frequent departmental activities, Department-Specific Activities Risk Assessments are used. Finally, Events / One-Off Activities Risk Assessments are applied to special services, concerts, and other unique events. This structured approach allows the Cathedral to proactively identify and manage potential risks, ensuring a safer environment for everyone.
- 13.12 In terms of the arrangements to ensure that staff are sufficiently safeguarded and potential risks mitigated, a Lone Working Policy is in place. This, together with associated guidance about appropriate boundaries, are addressed in the Code of Conduct and Code of Safer Working Practice, both of which are supported by national guidance.
- 13.13 Staff and volunteers are made aware of the safeguarding risks linked to the Cathedral's physical infrastructure during the induction process. Beyond general awareness, specific arrangements are in place for certain activities. For instance, a partnership agreement between the Cathedral and its bellringers details precise procedures for when children are present in the ringing chamber. Furthermore, the Cathedral's approach to managing vulnerable individuals, a key aspect of safeguarding, is robustly documented and practiced. The document titled 'Responding To a Security Incident' provides clear guidance on dealing with vulnerable people. The security team regularly applies this,

handling such situations on a weekly basis. Additionally, the porters' risk assessment specifically incorporates procedures for assisting vulnerable individuals.

13.14 The Audit identified a recent incident where a back-up channel on the radios was needed.

It became clear that not all staff were aware of this alternative communication method, leading to the following recommendation.

**Recommendation C16:** The Cathedral should ensure that all relevant staff and volunteers are aware of the back-up channels on the radio system.

## 14 Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk

- 14.1 The Audit observed a considered approach to safeguarding at the Cathedral aimed at identifying, managing and mitigating risk. This framework includes having the relevant policies, procedures and guidance in place, as well as promoting a culture where everyone is aware of and responsible for safeguarding.
- 14.2 The Cathedral's safeguarding Risk Register clearly documents concerns and control measures, underscoring that safeguarding is a key organisational priority. The findings regarding Risk Registers, detailed in Part One of this report, are equally applicable to the Cathedral's safeguarding practices.
- 14.3 All safeguarding concerns are reported to staff and then forwarded to either the CSO (when in post), the DSO, or the Chapter Lead. A dedicated phone line and email address are available for reporting. The DST provides support for escalated concerns after initial triage. Over the past three years, 41 recorded concerns were classified as safeguarding incidents, and there are currently three open cases.
- 14.4 The Cathedral conducts risk assessments for all its activities to ensure the safety of staff, volunteers, and visitors. All risk assessments specifically reference safeguarding. Recent assessments, for example, were undertaken for the Festival of Clergy Support Trust London Trip and the Library and Collections.
- 14.5 Whilst the Cathedral currently has no Safety Plans in place, processes exist should the need arise.

- 14.6 The Audit was advised there have been no Core Groups or disciplinary processes at the Cathedral over the past 12 months. the Audit's findings relating to Core Groups are outlined in Part One of this report.
- 14.7 The Cathedral is registered as a charity and has a legal requirement to submit Serious Incident Reports (SIRs) to the Charity Commission for England and Wales. Whilst it has yet to make any reports, the Cathedral is alert to the need to follow the relevant guidance set out in the House of Bishops' guidance.
- 14.8 A Partnership Agreement for Safeguarding Children, Young People, and Vulnerable Adults is in place between the DBF and Durham Cathedral. This agreement covers the sharing of information about safeguarding concerns, the risk management of individuals and contains a clear dispute resolution pathway. During the Audit's inquiry, the Cathedral was found to be unfamiliar with the dispute resolution process. Recommendation D28 is equally applicable to the Cathedral in this respect. A Safeguarding Complaints Policy is in place which details the process for individuals to raise concerns if they are dissatisfied with any aspect of how safeguarding matters have been addressed by the Cathedral.
- 14.9 In its handling of safeguarding related and personal information, the Cathedral takes a considered, measured, and data-minimised approach to its capture, storage, and retention. However, it was noted that volunteers currently utilise their personal email addresses for communication, which may include the sharing of written safeguarding reports.

<p><b>Recommendation C17:</b> The Cathedral should mandate the use of encrypted or secure email communication involving any safeguarding case.</p>
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14.10 The Audit's survey of the Cathedral's workforce found that most respondents were aware of the privacy notice regarding data protection. This is a positive indication and reflects the sustained efforts to comply with data protection requirements.

## 15 Victims and Survivors

- 15.1 Adhering to the House of Bishops' guidance, 'Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse', the Cathedral has expressed its commitment to supporting victims and survivors on its 'Safeguarding' webpage and in its Victims and Survivors Charter. That said, signposting to this specific guidance could be improved. Currently, the Victims and Survivors Charter links to the general Safeguarding e-manual but not directly to the relevant section.

**Recommendation C18:** The Cathedral should:

- a) Create a direct link to the 'Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse' section of the Safeguarding e-manual within its Victims and Survivors Charter.
- b) Embed the explainer videos from the 'Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse' section of the Safeguarding e-manual onto the 'Support for Victims and Survivors' sub-section of the Safeguarding webpage.

- 15.2 The Cathedral's Victim and Survivors Charter clearly articulates the commitment to support all victims and survivors of abuse, whether this occurred in or outside the Church. The Charter outlines the support available and established processes, emphasising a serious approach to handling safeguarding concerns and a victim-centred framework.
- 15.3 The Cathedral's website hosts a range of contact details including internal safeguarding personnel, emergency services, the Canon Pastor (who also serves as the Chapter member responsible for Victims and Survivors of Abuse), and the DSO. Roles are clearly differentiated, with the DSO managing safeguarding cases and the Canon Pastor ensuring victim / survivor advocacy and contributing to the refinement of future practices.

- 15.4 Durham Cathedral hosts an annual safeguarding week, during which specific initiatives are promoted to listen to and amplify the voices of victims and survivors. One notable example is the ‘Pillars of Hope’, an initiative designed to raise the profile of those who have experienced abuse. The Audit heard of the significant impact of ‘Pillars of Hope’, which facilitated reflective conversations and signposted individuals to support. This initiative was promoted across various platforms, including social media and a dedicated website, showcasing works by victims and survivors to promote engagement and offer encouragement.
- 15.5 The Audit also heard of how the Dean set aside time to listen to the voice of a victim / survivor and offer his apologies for what they experienced. This had a marked impact on the victim / survivor. The Cathedral’s Strategic Safeguarding Committee now benefits from the membership of the CEO of the Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre. Whilst this is positive in ensuring individual voices are being heard, the Audit believes that more can be done to help strengthen the Cathedral’s position on raising the profile of victims and survivors and makes the following recommendation.

**Recommendation C19:** The Cathedral should partner with the DBF to host Diocese-wide listening events, providing an additional platform to hear from a diverse range of voices to inform local safeguarding practice.

## 16 Learning, Supervision and Support

### Learning

- 16.1 Durham Cathedral benefits from a close working partnership with the DBF in the delivery of safeguarding training. The Cathedral follows the Diocese-wide safeguarding training strategy, which is aligned with the CofE's national safeguarding learning and development framework. There is a training programme in place, with staff and volunteers being expected to complete training every three years. Additional modules are available and undertaken where role-specific responsibilities require them. Training is accessed through DBF or national pathways, and records indicate a high level of compliance among core staff.
- 16.2 Senior leadership, including members of Chapter and senior operational staff, have completed Leadership or Senior Leadership training in the last 12 months. While positive, the prolonged vacancy in the CSO post has impacted the Cathedral's ability to develop bespoke internal training, lead safeguarding initiatives, and co-ordinate a structured CPD offer. It is positive that this vacancy has since been filled. This is further addressed in the Culture, Leadership and Capacity section of this report.

### Clergy Support

- 16.3 Residentiary clergy at the Cathedral, including the Dean and Canon Pastor, demonstrate strong engagement with safeguarding responsibilities, particularly during the CSO vacancy. The Cathedral's clergy have access to the same pastoral and wellbeing support systems available to all diocesan clergy. This includes the confidential counselling service, which is managed by a part-time Counselling Lead with a background in NHS psychological support. Clergy can self-refer or be signposted into the service by the

safeguarding team or diocesan leaders. Ministerial Development Review (MDR) processes are also in place.

### **Supervision and Support**

- 16.4 During the CSO vacancy, the Cathedral has retained access to the DSO, with the Canon Pastor and COO providing triage and case oversight. Once the CSO post is recruited, it will be important to reinstate formal supervision and review the remit of the Operational Safeguarding Committee, which has been largely inactive in the absence of a CSO.
- 16.5 Wider support is evident through the safeguarding discussions that are taking place regularly at Executive Leadership Team, Chapter, and Strategic Safeguarding Committee level. Staff briefings and communication initiatives have also embedded safeguarding into Cathedral life, with tangible outputs such as safeguarding noticeboards, refreshed safeguarding logos, and staff contact cards all contributing to a sense of focus and support.

## 17 Conclusion

- 17.1 The Audit of Durham Cathedral's safeguarding practices reveals a robust framework underpinned by strong leadership and a palpable commitment from all levels of staff. There is clear evidence of a proactive and dedicated approach to safeguarding.
- 17.2 The Dean's determined efforts to dismantle clerical exceptionalism and embed accountability have fostered significant cultural shifts, promoting feedback and challenging established power dynamics. This 'safeguarding first' philosophy is deeply ingrained, emanating from the Dean and his senior team, and permeating the entire workforce.
- 17.3 Effective governance and oversight mechanisms are demonstrably in place, with safeguarding consistently featuring in Chapter meetings. The exemplary shared leadership between the Dean and the Senior Non-Executive Member serves as a benchmark for good practice in this area.
- 17.4 Safer recruitment processes are well-established, characterised by comprehensive checks and clear procedures designed to deter unsuitable individuals. Safeguarding awareness is widely promoted through diverse channels, including noticeboards, staff briefings, social media, and service sheets. The Cathedral also demonstrates a proactive approach to risk management, supported by clear policies, procedures, and a detailed safeguarding Risk Register.
- 17.5 Arrangements for chorister safeguarding are generally well-developed, benefiting from close collaboration between the Cathedral and Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation. Choristers themselves overwhelmingly report feeling safe and supported. Dedicated

facilities, thorough staff training, and consistent supervision further reinforce this strength.

- 17.6 A strong collaborative partnership with the Diocesan Board of Finance for safeguarding training and case consultation is a significant asset. Furthermore, the Cathedral's commitment to victims and survivors is clearly articulated on its website and within its Charter, emphasising a victim-centred framework. Initiatives such as 'Pillars of Hope' and the Dean's direct apologies have had a profound impact on survivors, complemented by the expertise of external professionals on the Strategic Safeguarding Committee.
- 17.7 Whilst internal safeguarding efforts have instilled confidence within the workforce, a notable disparity in perception exists within the worshipping community, where a significant minority remains unsure or neutral about safeguarding improvements. This perception gap necessitates a targeted communication strategy to actively reassure worshippers, highlight specific improvements, and encourage direct engagement and reporting of concerns.
- 17.8 The absence of a dedicated Cathedral Safeguarding Advisor / Officer has been identified as a potential vulnerability. The Audit therefore welcomes the commitment to recruit to this key post. This planned appointment represents a critical step towards enhancing safeguarding oversight and operational delivery, which the Audit believes can be further enhanced through a restructuring of safeguarding assets across the wider Diocese, encompassing the Cathedral.
- 17.9 The recommendations outlined in this report, many of which stem from suggestions made by those engaged across the Cathedral, are aimed at further strengthening their position and accelerating their ongoing improvement journey. These areas include, but are not limited to, achieving greater authoritative scrutiny at Chapter in partnership with the Strategic Safeguarding Group, addressing some legacy issues to strengthen relationships

and processes within the work supporting choristers and their families, and capitalising on the strong relationship between the DBF and the Cathedral to exemplify how a combined approach to safeguarding can enhance the safety of individuals.



# Appendices

## 18 Appendix 1 – DBF Recommendations

**Recommendation D1:** To enhance support for the Diocesan Bishop and ensure continuous senior leadership oversight of safeguarding matters, it is recommended that a Suffragan Bishop be formally integrated into the DBF safeguarding processes. The responsibilities of the Suffragan Bishop should include maintaining awareness of safeguarding matters, attending relevant safeguarding meetings, supporting the Diocesan Bishop on safeguarding issues, and providing objective perspectives and challenge on complex issues. For effective implementation, the role requires a clear definition that maintains the Diocesan Bishop's ultimate accountability.

**Recommendation D2:** To optimise strategic oversight and information sharing without diluting the safeguarding responsibilities of all Archdeacons, the Audit recommends the role of 'Lead Archdeacon'. This could help to create a clearer point of contact, potentially through a rotating responsibility that broadens understanding and ensures consistent attendance (from at least one Archdeacon) at all Safeguarding Management Group (SMG) meetings.

**Recommendation D3:** To ensure Archdeacons are comprehensively informed and effective during parish engagements (including informal visits and more formal visitations / inspections), the DBF should enhance the existing process and templates for all pre planned parish visits. This should include implementing annual planning meetings with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST) to align strategies. Crucially, pre-visit briefings from the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) should also be formalised, providing Archdeacons with updates about all relevant safeguarding issues, specific cases, and the status of any safety plans pertinent to their geographical area. This will allow for Archdeacons to be fully sighted on concerns and more equipped to test and support good safeguarding practice. Following visits, post-visit debriefings with the DSO and DST are recommended to capture insights and inform diocesan strategy.

In addition, to assure itself of the quality and impact of Parish Dashboard data, the DBF should define and adopt a Parish Dashboard quality assurance process. While it should be built on the principle of 'working with' rather than 'doing to', this process should involve dip sampling to test the veracity of Parish Dashboard data.

**Recommendation D4:** Archdeacons should receive dedicated training and support regarding their functions as Core Group Chairs. Training should focus on facilitation skills for chairing these sensitive meetings and could be enhanced through the adoption of regional good practice workshops. Furthermore, to ensure impartiality, conflict of interest checks for chairs should be a standard practice.

**Recommendation D5:** Integrate robust methods to measure the impact of safeguarding practices across all relevant activities, including an enhanced programme of internal assurance audits. This enhanced programme could be significantly strengthened by developing a Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) skills database, enabling greater involvement of volunteers with relevant safeguarding skill sets in these crucial audits. Such measures will provide valuable data for continuous improvement and allow for a more effective evaluation of policy and practice.

**Recommendation D6:** Establish a three-year meeting cycle for in-depth reviews of specific areas aligned with National Safeguarding Standards (NSS) and action plans. This cycle should be complemented by annual planning meetings with the Safeguarding Management Group (SMG) and other key stakeholders to ensure cohesive and complementary activities, thereby avoiding duplication of effort and enhancing the overall impact of safeguarding oversight.

**Recommendation D7:** Conduct a comprehensive review of the functions of the SMG alongside those of the DSAP to ensure optimal strategic alignment and collaborative effectiveness in safeguarding oversight.

**Recommendation D8:** Develop a written update proforma for Core DSAP members to complete before meetings. Core member status should be agreed by the Chair and include those with specific responsibilities or who represent agencies that offer valuable insights into current and developing safeguarding themes. Examples include the DSO/CSL/CSA, a Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) or Parish representative or an attendee from a charity or statutory partner. This proforma should concisely capture emerging safeguarding issues, the impact of their safeguarding practices during the last reporting period, and a dynamic question that changes after each meeting. This dynamic question is designed to address key issues such as the cost-of-living crisis, the implementation of the Jay Report, or any other relevant contemporary issue.

The DSAP Chair should be given sufficient days to facilitate their outreach, especially to statutory agencies that are difficult to reach consistently.

**Recommendation D9:** The Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) should formally record the examination of Blue Files upon both receipt and prior to dissemination, ensuring comprehensive record-keeping.

**Recommendation D10:** A strategic restructuring of the diocesan safeguarding arrangements should be undertaken to create a dedicated Safeguarding Directorate that is led by a professional Director of Safeguarding. This should also include the Cathedral's safeguarding functions.

Note: This recommendation should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Directorate section in the [Independent Safeguarding Audits Annual Report \(2024/2025\)](#).<sup>7</sup>

**Recommendation D11:** The DBF should immediately prioritise recruiting an additional full-time caseworker role, potentially as a job share, to increase team capacity and broaden the range of experience within the DST.

**Recommendation D12:** The DBF should develop a portfolio approach within the DST to enable more focused work on critical areas such as victim / survivor support, offender management, and training delivery.

**Recommendation D13:** A cost-benefit analysis of the current training provision should be conducted by the DBF. This analysis will determine the appropriateness of continuing with existing arrangements versus investing in an additional safeguarding professional and allocating a training budget for external provision when required. The primary objective of this review is to identify which model would most effectively enhance the DST's overall capabilities and reach.

**Recommendation D14:** The DBF should provide targeted training and upskilling for the Safeguarding Support Officer (SSO) to maximise their contribution to administering essential safeguarding support functions. These functions include Dashboard support, training evaluation, call filtering, and direct support to parishes. This enhancement would not only improve parish support but also facilitate the gathering of insights on safeguarding activities and efficiently filter non-safeguarding enquiries.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://ineqe.com/churchofengland/>

**Recommendation D15:** The DBF should embed the professional supervision of the Cathedral Safeguarding Advisor / Officer within the wider DST. This role should cultivate specialist knowledge in Cathedral safeguarding and serve as a contingency resource for the wider DST to address unforeseen operational demands. This arrangement should be reciprocal, offering contingency support within the Cathedral environment when required.

**Recommendation D16:** In addition to the infrequent conversations outlined, the DBF should establish structured opportunities for informal safeguarding discussions and peer support. This could include regular ‘safeguarding coffee hours’ or ‘lunch and learn’ sessions for small groups of staff and / or promoting an internal online forum or chat group where staff can pose questions, share insights, and seek advice from colleagues and the DSO. The DBF should also ensure that line managers are encouraged and empowered to allocate time for these informal interactions within their teams.

**Recommendation D17:** The DBF should adopt the use of an email marketing system for issuing and managing the safeguarding newsletter.

**Recommendation D18:** The DBF should conduct a review of its safeguarding webpages data to identify user behaviour patterns, popular content, and areas for improvement. The DBF should use the analysis of this data to inform and enhance the design, layout, user interface (UI), and user experience (UX) of the website.

**Recommendation D19:** The DBF should develop and implement a structured communications plan for safeguarding messages across its digital channels. This plan should include a content calendar outlining timely, considered safeguarding messages for regular inclusion in email newsletters (e.g., a dedicated section or recurring feature) and scheduled posts on relevant social media platforms. Content should be varied, covering topics such as policy updates,

training opportunities, real-life examples (anonymised), reminders of reporting mechanisms, and messages promoting a culture of vigilance and support. The DBF should assign responsibility for content creation, approval, and scheduling, ensuring all messages are consistent, accessible, and align with current safeguarding guidelines. Regular review of engagement metrics should inform future content strategy to maximise reach and impact.

**Recommendation D20:** The DBF should undertake a review to map the types of activities involving children and young people that are taking place within parishes, what the focus of such activities are and to identify any aspects of good practice and / or potential gaps.

**Recommendation D21:** Further to reviewing existing practice, the DBF should consider implementing new and / or extended models for youth participation in consultation with parishes and its existing networks, including the Cathedral.

**Recommendation D22:** The DBF should include defined review dates for all risks described within its Risk Register(s). Risks should be reviewed on a quarterly basis or as a minimum, at a six-monthly basis, with any changes (and the rationale for these) being documented in relevant meeting minutes.

**Recommendation D23:** The DBF should commission an external resource to comprehensively review, cleanse, and curate the inputting of existing data into the NSCMS. This activity should operate under terms of reference set by the DSO and adhere to the 'Guiding Principles' for the NSCMS.

**Recommendation D24:** The DBF should implement a systematic process for the review and updating of all safeguarding risk assessments related to active Safety Plans. This process should include assessing new or evolving risks and revising control measures, ensuring

continuous alignment with current good practice, integration of lessons learned from incidents (if any), and reflect a contemporary understanding of risks. These updates should adopt the current 'Standard Risk Analysis and Risk Management' format.

**Recommendation D25:** The DBF should proactively raise awareness of the dispute resolution pathway across the Diocese.

**Recommendation D26:** The DBF should rapidly review the arrangements in place covering secure and accessible data management at a parish level. This should include a review of the guidance, equipment and technical solutions available to PSOs to undertake their safeguarding functions.

**Recommendation D27:** Notwithstanding the review of the arrangements in place, the DBF should advise all parishes that PSOs (and any other parish staff and volunteers handling sensitive data) should adopt a policy stipulating that confidential safeguarding records should not be stored on personal devices.

**Recommendation D28:** To mitigate risks associated with unforeseen circumstances such as the passing of a PSO, the DBF should develop and enact a comprehensive data succession plan. This plan should clearly outline:

- Designated Access: Who has authorised access to safeguarding records in the event of a PSO's incapacitation or departure (i.e. the DSO/DST)
- Secure Handovers: A formal process for the secure handover of all safeguarding data and associated access credentials when a PSO leaves their role.



- **Emergency Access Procedures:** Clearly defined procedures for gaining urgent access to vital safeguarding information in an emergency, including relevant technical support.

**Recommendation D29:** To ensure compliance and reinforce best practice, the DBF should:

- Conduct regular audits of data storage practices across all parishes to ensure adherence to the new protocols.
- Encourage ongoing training for all PSOs and relevant personnel on data protection, secure data storage, and the established data succession plan. This training should emphasise the critical importance of safeguarding sensitive information and the potential risks of non-compliance.

**Recommendation D30:** All members of the DST who may receive calls from distressed individuals should undergo training in:

- **Trauma-Informed Practice:** Understanding the impact of trauma on individuals and responding in a way that avoids re-traumatisation.
- **Mental Health First Aid / Awareness:** Basic understanding of common mental health conditions and how to support individuals experiencing a mental health crisis.
- **Suicide Awareness and Intervention:** Training on recognising signs of suicidal ideation and appropriate intervention strategies (e.g., signposting to crisis lines).
- **Difficult Conversations and Conflict Resolution:** Skills for navigating challenging conversations and managing potential conflict.

**Recommendation D31:** The DBF should further enhance its ‘Report Abuse’ webpage by incorporating direct signposts to local mental health services within the Durham region, e.g. the Mental Health Alliance.

**Recommendation D32:** The DSO should schedule check-in points for victims and survivors, to create defined and diarised opportunities to engage with them.

**Recommendation D33:** The DBF should strengthen its safeguarding telephone guidance for those receiving disclosures by incorporating a trauma-informed approach. This should include:

- Providing a clear explanation of the importance of a trauma-informed approach.
- Setting out how disclosures from potential victims and survivors may vary significantly based on their individual experiences.
- Clear steps for assessing the caller's immediate safety and risk level and the actions to take in an emergency.
- Guidance on using empathetic language, active listening techniques, and non-judgmental responses.
- Strategies for calming distressed callers and managing potentially volatile conversations.
- Guidance covering the local and national support services available to which distressed callers can be signposted.
- Clear instructions on maintaining confidentiality while adhering to safeguarding and data protection regulations.
- Guidance on maintaining professional boundaries and managing personal emotional impact.

- Protocols for concluding calls in a way that leaves the caller feeling supported and informed of next steps.
- Guidance on the support available via debriefs / supervision with managers, peer support mechanisms, and access to Employee Assistance.

**Recommendation D34:** The DBF should partner with the Cathedral to host Diocese-wide listening events, expanding the platform to hear from diverse voices that can help to shape local safeguarding strategy and practice. Such initiatives require careful execution, ensuring active listening, appropriate responses, and effective awareness-raising.

**Recommendation D35:** The DBF should explore a proportionate, Diocese-wide evaluation process for safeguarding training that evidences impact and is focused on confidence, behavioural change, and culture.

**Recommendation D36:** The DBF should enhance support to PSOs by expanding accessible peer learning opportunities and introducing targeted micro-training or drop-in forums, particularly in high-need or low-capacity parishes.

## 19 Appendix 2 – Cathedral Recommendations

**Recommendation C1:** To bridge the current perception gap, provide greater clarity, and build confidence in safeguarding practices among worshippers, especially occasional worshippers, the Cathedral should implement a targeted communication strategy. This strategy should evidence safeguarding improvements and actively encourage questions and the reporting of any concerns.

1. This communication strategy should involve multi-faceted engagement, including:
  - Regular, prominent updates on safeguarding initiatives via weekly notices, the Cathedral website, and dedicated information sessions. These updates should highlight specific improvements and the ‘safeguarding first’ commitment of staff, volunteers, and clergy.
  - Reinforce easily identifiable points of contact for safeguarding concerns. This should include the introduction of the CSA/O once appointed.
  - Opportunities for direct dialogue, such as ‘meet the safeguarding team’ (new CSA/O) events or Q&A sessions, allowing worshippers to engage directly on any issues they may wish to clarify.
  - Measurement of effectiveness will be crucial. This should include:
    - Follow-up surveys with the worshipping community (e.g., annually or bi-annually) to track shifts in neutrality / uncertainty regarding safeguarding.
    - Monitoring the reporting of concerns and contacts with staff and volunteers related to safeguarding.
    - Analysis of qualitative feedback from one-to-one discussions and focus groups, to gauge the ongoing sense of safeguarding awareness within

the worshipping community and their understanding of pathways to help.

- Regular outcome reporting to leadership and Chapter meetings.

**Recommendation C2:** Synchronise SSG focus with Chapter Governance: Align the SSG's focus, activities, and themes directly with the Chapter's strategic agenda.

**Recommendation C3:** Implement Themed Scrutiny: Adopt a three-year themed approach for scrutinising National Safeguarding Standards, ensuring alignment of reporting across governance and oversight bodies and with Charity Commission expectations.

**Recommendation C4:** Enhance DSAP Collaboration: Engage in structured collaboration with the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP), potentially through a joint annual meeting or event focused on key themes and continuous improvement.

**Recommendation C5:** Diversify SSC Membership: Conduct inclusion, diversity, and skills audits for the SSC to ensure the broadest possible membership. This should include, for example, leads from local charities, to bring in diverse perspectives and expertise.

**Recommendation C6:** Clarify governance and oversight responsibilities: Develop a Governance and Oversight Toolkit: Work with the Chapter and the newly appointed CSA/O to create a governance and oversight toolkit. This tool should clearly separate roles, responsibilities, and expectations, while ensuring mutually supportive oversight and scrutiny.

**Recommendation C7:** Establish an Operational Safeguarding Sub-Group: Upon the appointment of a CSA/O, establish an operational sub-group chaired by the CSA/O. This group, comprising staff and volunteers involved in day-to-day safeguarding, will manage operational matters and escalate any strategic issues to the main Safeguarding Group.

**Recommendation C8:** Independent Chair Presence at Chapter Meetings: While the SSC provides an annual update to the Chapter, consideration should be given to inviting the Independent Chair to all Chapter meetings to support the work of the Cathedral Safeguarding Lead (CSL) and act as a critical friend when considering safeguarding or related matters.

**Recommendation C9:** Professional Supervision for CSA/O: While the CSA/O should be located in and dedicated to safeguarding across the Cathedral, they should be professionally supervised by the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) as part of the wider Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST).

**Recommendation C10:** Establish a Dedicated Safeguarding Directorate: Work with the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) to establish a dedicated Safeguarding Directorate under the leadership of a professional Director of Safeguarding.

**Recommendation C11:** The Cathedral should continue to strengthen its communication and engagement with chorister families by developing structured opportunities for listening, feedback, and collaborative problem-solving. This should include timely, accessible communication about activities and changes, active consideration of the needs of neurodiverse children, and an approach rooted in relational safeguarding - one that values transparency, accountability, and the repair of trust where it has previously been impacted.

**Recommendation C12:** The Cathedral should produce a clear explanation of safeguarding responsibilities during Cathedral-led chorister activities, including which organisation (DCSF or the Cathedral) the responsibility sits with. This should include those activities taking place during the school day and should be shared with families as part of regular safeguarding communications.

**Recommendation C13:** The Cathedral should explore opportunities for music and supervisory staff to access behaviour management training aligned with the approach of DCSF. This will help to ensure consistency of expectation, confidence in shared spaces and responding to pupil behaviour. Sessions should also include training on working effectively with neurodiverse children.

**Recommendation C14:** The Cathedral should prioritise the restoration of non-operational CCTV systems in key chorister areas, such as the organ loft, and ensure that new installations in the Song School are implemented in consultation with safeguarding staff, with appropriate consideration of both safeguarding and privacy.

**Recommendation C15:** The Cathedral should review its current chaperoning model to assess the balance of responsibility between school and Cathedral staff and consider increasing Cathedral-led capacity to ensure continuity and resilience in supervision arrangements over time.

**Recommendation C16:** The Cathedral should ensure that all relevant staff and volunteers are aware of the back-up channels on the radio system.

**Recommendation C17:** The Cathedral should mandate the use of encrypted or secure email communication involving any safeguarding case.

**Recommendation C18:** The Cathedral should:

- a) Create a direct link to the 'Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse' section of the Safeguarding e-manual within its Victims and Survivors Charter.
- b) Embed the explainer videos from the 'Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse' section of the Safeguarding e-manual onto the 'Support for Victims and Survivors' sub-section of the Safeguarding webpage.

**Recommendation C19:** The Cathedral should partner with the DBF to host Diocese-wide listening events, providing an additional platform to hear from a diverse range of voices to inform local safeguarding practice.



## 20 Appendix 3 – Glossary of Abbreviations

<b>Abbreviations and Acronyms</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
ADSA	Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser
ADSO	Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Officer
AEC	Association of English Cathedrals
BACP	British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
CAFA	Cathedrals Administration and Finance Association
CCSL	Clergy Current Status Letter
CCTV	Closed-circuit TV
CDM	Clergy Discipline Measure
CJSM	Criminal Justice Secure Mail
CofE	Church of England
COO	Chief Operating Officer
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CSA	Cathedral Safeguarding Advisor
CSO	Cathedral Safeguarding Officer
CSL	Cathedral Safeguarding Lead
CSMG	Cathedral Safeguarding Management Group
DBE	Diocesan Board of Education
DBF	Diocesan Board of Finance
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DCSF	Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation
DSA	Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor

DSAP	Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
DSO	Diocesan Safeguarding Officer
DST	Diocesan Safeguarding Team
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HR	Human Resources
IICSA	Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse
ISA	Information Sharing Agreement
IT	Information Technology
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
LLR	Learning Lessons Reviews
LSAB	Lancashire Safeguarding Adults Board
MDR	Ministerial Development Review
MOSOVO	Management of Sexual Offenders and Violent Offenders
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAPAC	National Association for People Abused in Childhood
NPCC	National Police Chiefs' Council
NSCMS	National Safeguarding Case Management System
NSS	National Safeguarding Standards
NST	National Safeguarding Team
PCC	Parochial Church Council
PCR2	Past Cases Review 2
PSO	Parish Safeguarding Officer
PTO	Permission to Officiate
RSL	Regional Safeguarding Lead

SARC	Sexual Assault Referral Centre
SCIE	Social Care Institute for Excellence
SCMG	Safeguarding Case Management Group
SEO	Search Engine Optimisation
SIR	Serious Incident Report
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SMG	Safeguarding Management Group
SOG	Safeguarding Operational Group
SSC	Strategic Safeguarding Committee
SSO	Safeguarding Support Officer

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