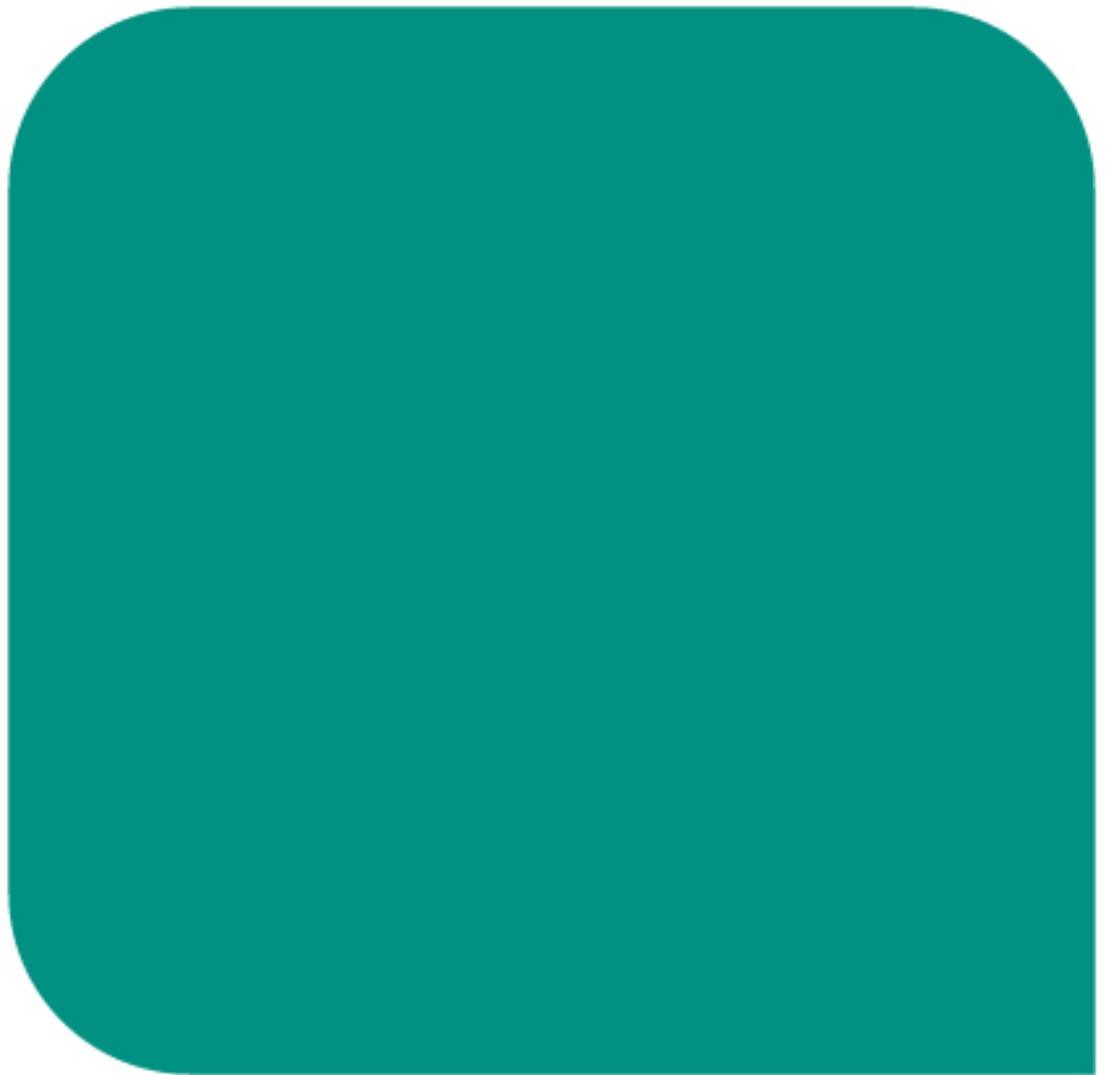




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Independent auditing of diocesan safeguarding arrangements for the Church of England: Pilot overview report



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**Independent auditing of diocesan
safeguarding arrangements for
the Church of England**

Pilot overview report

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1 Introduction

1.1 The audits

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) has been commissioned nationally by the National Safeguarding Team as part of the Archbishops Council to provide a programme of independent audits of diocesan safeguarding arrangements for the Church of England.

The process began with four pilot audits designed to test the planning, the conduct and output of the audit approach. The dioceses in Portsmouth, Salisbury, Blackburn and Durham volunteered to participate in this stage of the project, which has enabled the audit methodology and supporting documents to be amended on the basis of the evaluation of the pilots.

The next stage of the audit is the national roll-out using the amended methodology, and this will take place during 2016 and 2017.

1.2 Purpose of this report

This report is an overview of the findings of the four pilots, highlighting the strengths and areas for development within the dioceses and their progress in relation to implementation of national policy and practice guidance. If there are issues which have national or systemic implications for safeguarding in the Church these have been identified as needing specific consideration by the National Safeguarding Team.

Each pilot diocese has received its own report, which is being published on their websites. Additionally, feedback on individual cases, examined as part of the audit, has been provided to each diocese. These contain confidential information about individuals and is not for publication.

A separate report is being published which explains and evaluates the methodology of the pilot audits, and the changes planned in the national audit.

1.3 Structure of the report

1. Overview of what is working well and what needs to work better across the four pilots, along with the considerations for the National Safeguarding Team
2. Overview of findings from the pilots, with relevant considerations for the for the National Safeguarding Team

2 Overview of pilot findings

2.1 Introduction

The development of safeguarding arrangements differs between dioceses and consequently there are variations in how the service is organised and managed, albeit within the national safeguarding policy and practice guidance framework. Each diocese has its own particular strengths and areas for development, but all the pilot sites are committed to improving the safeguards for children and vulnerable adults who are involved in the Church of England.

The national audit provides the opportunity to independently assess the current strengths and areas of development in safeguarding arrangements within each diocese, and through this gives the opportunity to share good practice and strategies, so as to facilitate learning from each other.

It was evident in all the dioceses, that for safeguarding to be an integral aspect of Church life and work, leadership from the bishops and senior clergy is necessary. It is this leadership which is able to effect the cultural changes that will make safeguarding everyone's responsibility. The evidence from these pilots is that whilst all four dioceses vary, there has in recent years been, and continues to be, progress towards embedding a safe culture.

This audit does not cover safeguarding practice within the cathedrals, unless there are joint safeguarding arrangements in place between the diocese and cathedral.

What's working well?

Overall the auditors were impressed with the openness and desire to improve safeguarding practice which was evident in all four pilot dioceses. The commitment of those who participated, to the safety of children and adults, was evident in the openness in which they discussed with the auditors their views about the challenges faced within each diocese.

Each of the dioceses has seen improvement in safeguarding practice over recent years, especially in relationship to the growing understanding that this should not be just the responsibility of the DSA. However, the extent of this progress varies between and within the dioceses.

Generally positive improvements were seen in the consistent use of the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS), the quality of casework including risk assessments of offenders, safe recruitment and selection practice, increased safeguarding training provision and attendance and good partnership working with other agencies.

In all the dioceses, the Bishop and senior managers were supportive and accessible to the DSA, through both regular meetings and ad hoc discussions as required. The DSAs also had full access to personnel files for the clergy if needed.

The dioceses are all at a point of active consideration of how to improve safeguarding practice and each had their own strengths. Of note is the:

- introduction of a Learning Lessons review process for complex cases, so as to improve local processes

- plan to introduce self evaluation within parishes via a parish review process
- overcoming geographical distance and physical separation by taking the training to more remote areas and using internet conferencing for some meetings
- involvement of an archdeacon in training delivery
- supervision of the DSA from two sources, one an expert on children's safeguarding and the other from adult safeguarding
- commissioning out the DBS responsibilities and freeing up administrative time for the DSA.

2.2 What needs to work better?

The isolation of the DSA partly comes with the role, and being the only specialist safeguarding professional within the diocese. The independent chair can be a great support in these circumstances, but they in turn can be isolated from other independent chairs. Without the external support of supervision and the national team, it may be more difficult for the DSA to provide effective challenge, albeit there was no evidence from the audit that this has occurred.

The management information systems generally need to be improved in all the dioceses, so as to enable staff to access up-to-date information regarding people's training and DBS status, as well as to provide comprehensive and accessible case recording and management decision making. There have been improvements in recent years through the individual efforts of the DSAs, but each diocese needs to ensure the systems in place are adequate.

Further work needs to be undertaken in some places to obtain parish understanding and compliance with safeguarding policy. For example, answering questions on the archdeacon's Articles of Enquiry as well as consistently obtaining DBS or DBS renewals, especially in the context of long-standing volunteers.

Further work needs to be undertaken to disseminate information and cultural understanding that safeguarding is about adults as well as children.

2.3 Considerations for the National Safeguarding Team

This section highlights the issues with national relevance from the pilot findings and provides considerations for possible action by the National Safeguarding Team – they are listed here for convenient access, but also appear at the end of the relevant finding.

The National Safeguarding Team (NST) to:

- 1) consider what are the essential and desirable qualifications and experience for DSAs in the future (see 3.2)
- 2) consider how to ensure that DSAs are in receipt of professional safeguarding supervision (see 3.2)
- 3) consider how to develop stronger links and support services to the individual DSAs (see 3.2)

- 4) consider how to develop stronger links and support services to the independent chairs of the Diocesan Safeguarding Management Groups (see 3.3)
- 5) consider how to clarify the role of the DSMG within the diocese and its relationship to the Bishop's Leadership Team and the DSA(see 3.3)
- 6) provide Dioceses with:
 - clarity about the need (or not) of any local guidance, policy or procedures to complement national editions
 - information on the status of draft new guidance and what previous guidance (if any) is being replaced
 - a regularly updated list of any policy, guidance or procedure in the process of being written, or re-written nationally (see 3.5)
- 7) consider the need for clear and explicit national policies for complaints and for whistleblowing, as an integral part of the safeguarding structure, including the use of a staged complaints procedure and an easily accessible whistleblowing procedure (see 3.6)
- 8) To ascertain the levels of administrative support provided to DSAs, the extent to which it is perceived to be problematic and the implications for the DSA and the diocese (see 3.7)
- 9) contact all dioceses to ascertain if their safeguarding recording systems are adequate and consistent with national guidance and data protection requirements, particularly in relation to home working (see 3.8)
- 10) consider the need for open discussion within the Church about the implications of the inevitable blurring of personal / professional boundaries, when family members are involved in Church life: there should be clarity around when such overlaps mean that management responsibility of situations needs to be transferred to someone else (e.g. if an individual of concern has personal links with family members) (see 3.9)
- 11) consider the need for a more consistent national approach to the risk assessment of known offenders (see 3.9)
- 12) consider the need for a national position around the completion of safeguarding training prior to being accepted for Permission to Officiate (see 3.10)
- 13) consider the need for the Safer Recruitment Practice Guidance to address the level of information provided by the current diocesan bishop to a prospective diocesan bishop, prior to an appointment (see 3.11)
- 14) To consider if there is a need for further clarification around expectations and best practice in relation to resources for the provision of authorised listeners, advocates and counselling support for children and adults (see 3.12).

3 Overview of findings

3.1 Management

Each diocese varied in the arrangements made for the organisation of, and management responsibility for safeguarding, but all had the following common arrangements:

- The Bishop was responsible for safeguarding
- At least one Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor was in post
- All had an independently chaired Diocesan Safeguarding Panel/Diocesan Safeguarding Management Group (DSMG) overseeing the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements for children and adults in the diocese
- All have a senior management group/ Bishop's leadership team providing a strategic overview of safeguarding and having oversight of the Panel

The line management of the DSA was undertaken by the Diocesan Secretary or the Deputy Diocesan Secretary in three places, with an archdeacon as the manager in the fourth pilot site. Both management arrangements have their advantages, with the Diocesan Secretary having an overview of allocation of resources and experience of writing proposals for funding, whilst the Archdeacon provides a strong link to senior clergy.

Whilst the Diocesan Bishop was responsible for safeguarding, there was some variation in the ways tasks were delegated to others, and an archdeacon has the delegated lead role in two of the dioceses.

The monitoring role of safeguarding in parishes was well understood as being part of the archdeacon's responsibilities.

3.2 Diocesan safeguarding advisor/s

All four dioceses had paid diocesan safeguarding advisors in post. The hours worked, employment arrangements, professional background and experience varied.

Qualifications and experience

Three dioceses had appointed qualified social workers to the DSA post with varying degrees of safeguarding experience. From this small sample it is not possible to say whether or not a social work background provides the only relevant experience and skills for the role. However, given the complexity of the DSA task, the need to understand the different roles in the multi-agency safeguarding system and in particular the child protection system, such a background is likely to be an advantage. This is particularly relevant in the cases where there is insufficient information to refer to statutory services, but more direct work is required to assess the risks.

The auditors observed that the role of the DSA, as the only professional safeguarding staff member, involves the ability to operate effectively at a senior level within a complex organisation. It is not yet clear whether most DSAs have such experience or not prior to being appointed, but within the pilots some of the DSAs had previous management experience. In one diocese such experience was

particularly helpful in giving the DSA the confidence to be able to effectively challenge senior clergy; it is possible that this would be more difficult for someone without such experience and skills.

Supervision

Only one DSA received professional supervision. The supervision arrangements provided were particularly impressive with the commissioning of two supervisors, one with safeguarding social work expertise with children and the other with adults. Given the difficulties as DSAs will usually come with only children's or adult services background, this is a particularly helpful supervisory arrangement.

The lack of supervision arrangements in the remaining three dioceses is a weakness, albeit the DSA in one of these had been trying to identify a suitable provider. Given the comparatively isolated nature of the DSA role, without colleagues or managers with professional safeguarding experience, the role of supervision is particularly critical.

Roles and responsibilities

One diocese employed two part-time DSAs, splitting the role into responsibility for case work, and for policy and training. The post holder with responsibility for casework has safeguarding experience in their previous employment, and the second also now has this knowledge and experience through working in the diocese. The other three dioceses all had only one DSA, albeit the hours worked varied.

The responsibility for producing policies and procedures in line with national policy rests with the DSA in all the dioceses (albeit one DSA did not see writing them as part of their remit). However, with the primary focus on casework and then training, this is the area that gets least attention.

Employment arrangements

All five DSAs in the four pilot dioceses are paid for their work in line with national policy. In at least one case though, this is a relatively new position with the previous post holders being volunteers.

All but one diocese directly employed the DSA or one of the DSAs. One commissions a self-employed DSA, which they consider enables the DSA to be in a stronger position to provide challenge. The auditors were not convinced of this as a principle, as self-employment can bring with it job insecurity and consequent disincentive for such challenge, although there was no evidence of any insecurity in this case. Another diocese had two part-time DSAs, one employed and one self employed.

Support from the National Safeguarding Team

The extent of support from the National Team was not a focus of the pilots, but will be included in the main stage of the audits. It is significant because conversations with some DSAs highlighted their isolation and potential need for supports and consultation, outside of the diocese. In exploring the use of available options, it appears that the national church has not historically offered this resource. The recent development of a national team does provide opportunities to explore this relationship and how it could be, and is being developed, to provide greater liaison and support to the individual DSAs.

Considerations for the National Safeguarding Team

The National Safeguarding Team to consider what are the essential and desirable qualifications and experience for DSAs in the future.

The National Safeguarding Team to consider how to ensure that DSAs are in receipt of professional safeguarding supervision.

The National Safeguarding Team to consider how to develop stronger links and support services to the individual diocesan safeguarding advisors.

3.3 Diocesan Safeguarding Management Group

All the pilot dioceses have established DSMGs; in one case it has existed for over 15 years. Membership varies, with all aiming to get involvement of external agencies, but this has so far proved difficult for one diocese.

The role and time commitment of the chair varied between the dioceses, but is a voluntary position in all four dioceses. There was no evidence that being a volunteer has had a detrimental impact on the chair's input or performance. The auditors were mindful that the role, and hence the time commitment, varied. In one diocese it was particularly striking that the chair was providing considerable time to supporting the safeguarding function, and the auditors were concerned that in the long run this may not be a sustainable position for a volunteer.

The background experience of the chair differed between the diocese, but there was in common knowledge of or experience in safeguarding and management.

The composition of the DSMGs varied, but notable strengths in one or more groups was the involvement of an experienced safeguarding academic from the local university (, a lawyer and the Diocesan Bishop. The involvement of the latter in the DSMG reflected the explicit lead the Bishop provided on safeguarding.

A weakness for the chairs was the lack of active involvement in forums with other independent chairs.

There was insufficient clarity about how well the DSMG relates to the Bishop's Leadership Team, its role in the diocese and the extent to which it is able to hold the diocese to account.

Considerations for the National Safeguarding Team

The National Safeguarding Team to consider how to develop stronger links and support services to the independent chairs of the diocesan safeguarding management group.

The National Safeguarding Team to consider how to clarify the role of the DSMG within the diocese and its relationship to the Bishop's Leadership Team and the DSA

3.4 Monitoring of safeguarding in parishes as part of archdeacons' responsibilities

All the archdeacons who participated in the pilot were aware of their responsibility to monitor safeguarding in the parishes and the Articles of Enquiry address safeguarding. There was additional evidence in one diocese in particular of the challenges in obtaining the co-operation of all the parishes with this exercise.

3.5 Policy and Practice Guidance

All the dioceses adopt the House of Bishops' Policy and Practice Guidance. However, the production of local policies, guidance and procedures has provided challenges for the pilot dioceses for several reasons:

- Constructive delay whilst waiting for the production of up-to-date national safeguarding policies and procedures to be agreed and implemented in 2015
- Debate about the need or not to produce local versions of national policies: this seems to be a duplication of effort and it is not clear if local procedures provide added value or potentially lead to confusion
- This tends to be given less priority by the DSA than casework and training

The expectation provided by the National Safeguarding Team to the audit team was that the consultative drafts of guidance are followed prior to the issue of final agreed national guidance. Such an understanding of the status of draft guidance is not though understood universally.

There was evidence of local effort being put into writing diocesan policies, without the knowledge of imminent new national guidance being produced. As a result there were examples of wasted time and effort locally.

Considerations for the National Safeguarding Team

The national team to provide DSAs with:

- clarity about the need (or not) of any local guidance, policy or procedures to complement national editions*
- information on the status of draft new guidance and what previous guidance (if any) is being replaced*
- a regularly updated list of any policy, guidance or procedure in the process of being written, or re-written nationally.*

3.6 Complaints and whistleblowing

Complaints

There is a variation in the understanding of and response to complaints, with some confusion evident in casework about the distinction between a 'complaint' as opposed to a safeguarding concern. The term complaint was also sometimes being used when reporting safeguarding concerns.

Arrangements varied around the provision of a complaints procedure:

- one diocese has a brief complaints procedures without timescales or expected responses
- a second diocese has added information on how to complain about responses received about safeguarding concerns to the safeguarding section of the website; this is a positive step, but could be further improved with an accessible explicit procedure about the expectations of how the complaint will be dealt with, timescales and the provision of email and telephone access (instead of requiring a written complaint in the first instance).
- a third has a specific complaints procedure, but this only covers those offenders refused employment by the Bishop
- the fourth has no complaints policy.

Whistleblowing

The picture with regard to whistleblowing was also variable:

- one diocese had a standalone whistleblowing policy which could be used for safeguarding concerns
- a second had a new whistle blowing policy for staff in the Board of Finance, but not a universal system to be used for safeguarding concerns
- a third had a policy within the general safeguarding handbook, but without explicit details of who to contact
- the fourth diocese had no whistleblowing policy or procedure.

Considerations for the National Safeguarding Team

The provision of clear and explicit policies for complaints and for whistleblowing is an important part of the safeguarding structure. Consideration to be given to use of national procedures with provision for a staged complaints procedure and an easily accessible whistleblowing procedure.

3.7 Resources of safeguarding service

Three of the dioceses reported a time pressure on the administrative support available, which was demonstrated in a variety of ways including:

- lacking sufficient administrative support if the DSA has involvement in additional tasks, such a piloting training courses
- DSA being expected to take minutes of meetings e.g. of the DSMG
- the DSA spending time in administration as the DBS tasks use all or most of the administrative time available.

One diocese has commissioned out the DBS responsibilities, so freeing up administrative capacity.

The individual dioceses have accepted recommendations relating to this issue, but it may be a problem for other DSAs.

Considerations for the National Safeguarding Team

To ascertain the levels of administrative support provided to DSAs, the extent to which it is perceived to be problematic and the implications for the DSA and the diocese

3.8 Recording systems and IT solutions

All the pilot dioceses are in the midst of considering or implementing new IT solutions to the challenges of maintaining secure and up-to-date recording systems. Capturing the training completed and the date DBSs are due within the parishes is a challenge, and has only been attempted in recent years. Such performance management functions are at an early stage of development.

There was evidence that more work is required to ensure that all safeguarding records are part of the diocesan document management and storage systems in line with national practice guidance and data protection requirements. This is particularly an issue with those who are home based and/or whose recording is stored on a laptop computer as opposed to a diocesan recording system.

Blue files were accessed in two pilot dioceses, and the blue files of clergy who had been subject to a safeguarding allegation or complaint in only one diocese. The inspection of these files showed some inconsistencies around what is or is not entered in these files and how content is expressed and cross-referenced with safeguarding records. This will be further considered in the national audits.

Considerations for the National Safeguarding Team (NST)

The NST to contact all dioceses to ascertain if their safeguarding recording systems are adequate and consistent with national guidance and data protection requirements, particularly in relation to home working.

3.9 Casework

The auditors examined 65 cases files / records consisting of:

- allegations of abuse against a Church officer
- people in the congregation who are known to potentially pose a risk of abuse
- other scenarios where there may be a risk of abuse e.g. domestic violence, adult safeguarding
- scenarios where a risk of harm has been identified in respect of a child
- complaints about the diocesan response to safeguarding concerns

Detailed feedback, containing confidential information has been provided to each diocese.

Generally the quality of the casework is good, and demonstrates progress over time, with improvements in information sharing with statutory agencies and an understanding of when referrals need to be made.

The case audits have highlighted examples of the complexity around personal and professional boundaries. Because the families of clergy are often involved in Church life, there is a higher probability for conflicts of interest to arise due to family links with those whose behaviour may be the subject of concern. The recognition for the management of such issues needing to be passed to another member of the clergy may not always be identified as quickly as desirable.

Considerations for the national safeguarding team

The NST to consider the need for open discussion within the Church about the implications of the inevitable blurring of personal / professional boundaries, when family members are involved in Church life: there should be clarity around when such overlaps mean that management responsibility of situations needs to be transferred to someone else (e.g. if an individual of concern has personal links with family members)

Risk assessments and safeguarding contracts/agreements

All the pilot sites provided evidence of good safeguarding agreements/contracts of known offenders, and some annually reviewed these arrangements.

One diocese, whilst providing contracts, did not yet have a formal written risk assessment process, shared with other relevant agencies. The formal risk assessments in the other three dioceses were of good quality.

In one diocese the assessments highlighted the difficulty that some senior clergy have in understanding fully the need for such detailed assessments and agreements and the importance of balancing the pastoral needs of offenders with risk management and the needs and views of survivors. It also showed that there is a risk the DSA is not always informed promptly of all relevant cases needing such assessment.

Considerations for the national safeguarding team

The NST to consider the need for a more consistent national approach to the risk assessment of known offenders

3.10 Training

The balance between e-learning and face-to-face training varies between the dioceses, with the latter recognised as being more effective in terms of the amount of positive feedback and the links made with key people at parish level. However, providing this for all that need it is a challenge and the DSAs have initiated varying strategies to be able to achieve this task:

- one diocese provides e-learning for all Church staff, with the provision of face to face training dependent on role

- two DSAs have trained experienced safeguarding professionals to be volunteers to assist in the delivery of training and another is considering the use of volunteers or buying in additional training capacity
- in one diocese there was an example of excellent practice with the DSA and an archdeacon jointly training all clergy and readers in 2013: the Archdeacon used the theological element of the Chichester Report to stress the place of safeguarding within the whole context of the gospel message and living.

In two dioceses, no one applying for Permission to Officiate (PTO) is accepted until they have completed the safeguarding training provided by the DSA. Such training aims to meet the learning needs of new clergy in the diocese (including new curates), other applicants for PTO and lay readers. This strong lead from the bishops concerned provides a clear message of the essential nature of safeguarding training.

In one diocese, despite a strong leadership role by the Bishop, two of his staff have not completed safeguarding training in the last three years, although have done so previously. This is now being addressed by the diocese concerned.

Considerations for the national safeguarding team

The NST to consider the need for a national position around the completion of safeguarding training prior to being accepted for Permission to Officiate

3.11 Safe Recruitment of clergy, lay officers and volunteers

The evidence from the four pilot audits suggests that safer recruitment is an area which has been subject to considerable change and development in recent years, with appointments now consistently involving application forms, DBSs and references. This was not always the case some years ago.

A potential weakness within the system nationally is that a new diocese only receives the blue file after clergy have been appointed, and sometimes after they have started. The current clergy status letter (CCSL) is received from the previous diocesan bishop; this is effectively a reference, stating if the individual is suitable to minister. However, there was some recognition that the contents of the blue file may not always be represented adequately.

There remains in some parishes resistance to the need for DBS checks for long-standing volunteers. This arises because of a perception that doing so is an insult to people who have been doing unpaid tasks for a long time, and because the process is viewed as bureaucratic and mainly being the responsibility of volunteers.

In one diocese, people are still being appointed prior to their DBS and/or references being received, despite the policy which prohibits this.

Considerations for the national safeguarding team

The NST to consider the need for the Safer Recruitment Practice Guidance to address the level of information provided by the current diocesan bishop to a prospective diocesan bishop, prior to an appointment

3.12 Resources for children and vulnerable adults

There was a lack of clarity within the dioceses about what was required in relation to resources for supporting children and/or vulnerable adults. The use of authorised listeners for survivors of abuse varies, as does the provision to listen to children's views or provide support.

Authorised listeners

The role of authorised listeners provides challenges within the dioceses around the appropriateness of undertaking what can quickly develop into a counselling role. There were concerns about the use of unqualified and/or inexperienced people to undertake the work or the difficulty recruiting and training suitable people when the demand for the role fluctuates. The DSAs do not themselves have space to provide such a service. One of the dioceses also took the view that along with the above challenges, a survivor of abuse is also likely to prefer support external to the Church.

One diocese made an early decision to arrange support with an external local abuse counselling service. The DSA first assesses if there is a need for this provision.

Two more dioceses are in the process of making a decision to commission the service from a Christian counselling service, which already provides counselling to clergy and lay people, so the authorised listeners will be trained and supervised.

The fourth diocese does have authorised listeners and used the service twice in 2015.

Counselling and support for children

There are no formal structures around listening to children or young people specifically around safeguarding, but three of the dioceses do have some facilities for supporting and advocating for children:

- One diocese referred to the role of the local parishes in the provision of support to young people through youth workers and safeguarding representatives; the youth workers speak sometimes of fulfilling the role of advocates, but this is not specifically part of their job.
- Another diocese has an advisor for the children's ministry and a diocesan youth worker (post currently vacant) who takes the lead in hearing the views of young people; there is no formal advocacy service.
- A third diocese employs a children's work advisor and a youth officer, both of whom sit on the DSMG and understand safeguarding responsibilities; the role of children's champions no longer exist.

Considerations for the National Safeguarding Team

To consider if there is a need for further clarification around expectations and best practice in relation to resources for the provision of authorised listeners, advocates and counselling support for children and vulnerable adults.

3.13 Information sharing

Some dioceses have agreed information-sharing protocols or local guidance with statutory agencies, but this is a challenge for one which covers a wider geographical spread, due to having to negotiate with several different authorities and their Safeguarding Boards.

The evidence from the case audits though is that information sharing is generally good, albeit with a few exceptions in practice, none of which involved recent practice.