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# Independent safeguarding audit of St Albans Cathedral

April 2021



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND





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## About SCIE

The Social Care Institute for Excellence improves the lives of people of all ages by co-producing, sharing, and supporting the use of the best available knowledge and evidence about what works in practice. We are a leading improvement support agency and an independent charity working with organisations that support adults, families and children across the UK. We also work closely with related services such as health care and housing.

We improve the quality of care and support services for adults and children by:

- identifying and sharing knowledge about what works and what's new
- supporting people who plan, commission, deliver and use services to put that knowledge into practice
- informing, influencing and inspiring the direction of future practice and policy.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 THE AUDIT PROGRAMME

- 1.1.1 The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) is conducting an independent audit of the safeguarding arrangements of the cathedrals of the Church of England.
- 1.1.2 This programme of work will see three cathedral audits in 2018, 16 in 2019, four in 2020, 17 in 2021 and a final three early in 2022. There are 43 in total. It represents a significant investment in cathedrals and an important opportunity to support improvement in safeguarding.
- 1.1.3 All cathedrals are unique and differ in significant ways from a diocese. SCIE has drawn on its experience of auditing all 42 Church of England dioceses, and adapted it, using discussions and preliminary meetings with different cathedral chapters, to design an audit methodology fit for cathedrals. We have sought to balance cathedrals' diversity with the need for adequate consistency across the audits, to make the audits comparable, but sufficiently bespoke to support progress in effective and timely safeguarding practice in each separate cathedral. Cathedral representatives will play a key role in adapting the audit framework to their particular cathedral context. Only in this way will we achieve bespoke audits that are right for each place respectively. Bespoke audits will in turn optimise the usefulness of the audit process and outputs to supporting progress in effective and timely safeguarding practice. We look forward to working with you to this end.

### 1.2 ABOUT SCIE

- 1.2.1 The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) improves the lives of people who use care services by sharing knowledge about what works. We are a leading improvement support agency and an independent charity working with adults', families' and children's care and support services across the UK. We also work closely with related services such as health care and housing.
- 1.2.2 Safeguarding is one of our areas of expertise, for both adults and children. We have completed an independent safeguarding audit of diocesan arrangements across the Church of England as well as supporting safeguarding in other faith contexts. We are also committed to co-producing our work with people with lived experience of receiving services.

### 1.3 THE AUDIT PROCESS

#### SCIE Learning Together and our approach to audit

- 1.3.1 SCIE has pioneered a particular approach to conducting case reviews and audits in child and adult safeguarding that is collaborative in nature. It is called **Learning Together** and has proved valuable in the adults' and children's safeguarding fields. It built on work in the engineering and health sectors that has shown that improvement is more likely if remedies target the underlying causes of difficulties, and so use audits and reviews to generate that kind of understanding. So Learning Together involves exploring and sharing understanding of both the causes of problems and the reasons why things go well.

## Key principles informing the audit

**1.3.2** Drawing on SCIE's Learning Together model, the following principles underpin the approach we take to the audits:

- Working collaboratively: the audits done 'with you, not to you'
- Highlighting areas of good practice as well as problematic issues
- Focusing on understanding the reasons behind inevitable problems in safeguarding
- No surprises: being open and transparent about our focus, methods and findings so nothing comes out of the blue
- Distinguishing between unique local challenges and underlying issues that impact on all or many cathedrals

## Supporting improvements

**1.3.3** The overarching aim of each audit is to support safeguarding improvements. To this end our goal is to understand the safeguarding progress of each cathedral to date. We set out to move from understanding how things work in each cathedral, to evaluating how well they are working. This includes exploring the reasons behind identified strengths and weaknesses. Our conclusions will pose questions for the cathedral leadership to consider in attempting to tackle the underlying causes of deficiencies.

**1.3.4** SCIE methodology does not conclude findings with recommendations. We instead give the cathedral questions to consider in relation to the findings, as they decide how best to tackle the issue at hand. This approach is part of the SCIE Learning Together audit methodology. The approach requires those with local knowledge and responsibility for progressing improvement work, to have a key role in deciding what exactly to do to address the findings and to be accountable for their decisions. It has the additional benefit of helping to foster ownership locally of the work to be done to improve safeguarding.

## The process

**1.3.5** The process will involve reviewing documentation as well as talking to key people, including focus groups. Further details are provided in the [Appendices](#).

**1.3.6** The site visit will be either three days or 2.5 days. Cathedrals have been selected for the three-day audit to provide a broad base, or on the scale of an operation and/or where concerns may have been raised in the past for cathedral or diocese.

## Structure of the report

**1.3.7** This report is divided into:

- Introduction
- The findings of the audit presented per theme
- Questions for the cathedral to consider are listed, where relevant, at the end of each Findings section
- Conclusions of the auditors' findings: what is working well and areas for further development
- An appendix sets out the audit process and any limitations to this audit

## 2. CONTEXT

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### 2.1 CONTEXT OF THE CATHEDRAL AND DIOCESE

- 2.1.1 The leadership in each cathedral, as part of the audit process, was asked to supply a brief description of the institution:

*'St Albans Cathedral stands on the hillside where Alban, Britain's first Christian saint, was buried after giving his life for his faith over 1,700 years ago. Today the Cathedral welcomes many thousands of visitors every year. People come to share in our worship, explore our heritage and enjoy our wide-ranging events programme. All in a building and place that bears witness to the many centuries of its life, first as a monastic Abbey and now as a cathedral.'*

*The Cathedral is the oldest site of continuous Christian worship in Britain and is the home to two medieval shrines and several world-class medieval wall paintings. The core of the existing building dates over 900 years.'*

- 2.1.2 St Albans diocese is home to more than 1.6 million people and comprises the historic counties of Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, or, in terms of local government areas, Bedfordshire, Luton, Hertfordshire and parts of the London Borough of Barnet. It therefore ranges from small rural communities in villages and hamlets to major urban centres like Luton, Bedford, Watford and Hemel Hempstead, and includes suburban areas on London's outer reaches. St Albans itself is relatively affluent.
- 2.1.3 St Albans Cathedral is a parish church cathedral, meaning that as well as being the cathedral for the Diocese of St Albans, it also serves a geographical parish and local community. It is a place for large civic, county, and diocesan events but also hosts weddings, funerals, confirmations, and baptisms for those who live in the parish and members of the congregation living further afield.
- 2.1.4 It is home to a vibrant and active Christian community, made up of people of all ages and from many different backgrounds. Several hundred people contribute to the Cathedral as volunteers as well as members of the congregation. Along with many special services throughout the year, the Cathedral hosts services led by chaplains from different Christian denominations. An extensive programme of learning reaches many hundreds of children and adults, and the Cathedral has become a nationally renowned centre for heritage and theological learning.

### 2.2 CONTEXTUAL FEATURES RELEVANT TO SAFEGUARDING

- 2.2.1 St Albans Cathedral sits on a hill at the centre of St Albans, surrounded by a precinct comprising both buildings and extensive parkland. The remains of the roman city of Verulamium are at the bottom of the hill. The parkland and ruins are entirely open to the public, and, together with the Cathedral, are a popular tourist and heritage destination.
- 2.2.2 The ancient fabric of the Cathedral, its status as the oldest site of continuous Christian worship in Britain, and the commitment of the Chapter to making the building as open and welcoming as possible require a careful balance to be struck between considerations related to maintaining the integrity of fabric of the building and those which are more about safety and safeguarding. This interface is particularly sharp in relation to exterior lighting, use of CCTV, and access.
- 2.2.3 The previous Dean left St Albans Cathedral in February 2021. His successor has not



yet been appointed; meanwhile, the Sub Dean is acting into the position of Dean. The previous Cathedral Administrator left in December 2020, and the former Head of Finance and Development was appointed as the new Chief Operating Officer. Further changes of senior personnel within both the Cathedral and the Diocese are anticipated in the next few months, including the imminent recruitment of a Cathedral Safeguarding Officer (CSO).

- 2.2.4 The relationship between the Diocese and the Cathedral regarding safeguarding mirrors that of a parish church within the diocese. There is no service level agreement (SLA) in place, although this is in the process of being addressed.
- 2.2.5 A distinction is made within the Cathedral between ‘cathedral’ and ‘parish’ activities, with some job titles reflecting this. This follows through into structures, accountabilities, finance and governance.
- 2.2.6 The Cathedral Measure, agreed by Synod in November 2020, aimed to put cathedrals onto a firm governance footing which is fit for the 21st century. When introducing the draft measure to Synod, the steering committee chair said:

*‘It provides for co-regulation of cathedrals by the Charity Commission of England and Wales and the Church Commissioners and brings them under the Charities Act.*

*‘It provides for a clear governance structure, separating governance and management activities. It provides clarity over the roles and responsibilities of those involved in our cathedrals.*

*‘It provides for better, professional control of finance, risk and audit. It clarifies issues of property ownership and, most importantly, it has safeguarding at its heart.’*

- 2.2.7 These national changes mean, in turn, that certain of the governance and management structures in St Albans are also in the process of changing. This includes the removal of the Cathedral Council as an instrument of formal governance, adjustments to the composition of Chapter and the proposed development of an Executive Senior Management Team (SMT).
- 2.2.8 Further changes proposed by the Church’s National Safeguarding Team (NST) also have implications for dioceses and cathedrals which are still in the process of being worked through and understood.

## 2.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE SAFEGUARDING STRUCTURE (INCLUDING LINKS WITH THE DIOCESE)

- 2.3.1 The House of Bishops’ practice guidance *Key Roles and Responsibilities of Church Office Holders and Bodies* (2017) states that the role of the Dean is to provide leadership concerning safeguarding, and to encourage everyone to Promote a Safer Church. In the absence of a Dean following the recent departure of the previous postholder, the Sub Dean, who is also the Cathedral Safeguarding Lead (CSL) assumes this role.
- 2.3.2 The Dean is supported in their leadership role by a number of clergy and staff:
- The Sub Dean, who acts as Rector to the parish, is responsible for the 9.30am Sunday Eucharist and all occasional offices. She oversees the pastoral care of the congregation, chairs the volunteer committee and supervises both minor canons (the

Youth Chaplain and the Precentor), the Curate, the Cathedral Reader and two pastoral assistants. The Sub Dean is also Chapter Safeguarding Lead

- The Canon Chancellor, who oversees an extensive programme of learning and outreach, welcome to visitors, and the Cathedral's ecumenical work
- The Chief Operating Officer, who heads the lay staffing structure, oversees recruitment, business functions, visitor services, finance and manages the HR contract with mentor
- The Master of Music, who reports directly to the Dean and has oversight of the music department and choirs
- The Head Virger, who oversees the safety and security of the buildings and immediate surroundings, reporting to the COO
- The (volunteer) Cathedral Safeguarding Officer, who is overseen by the Sub Dean.

**2.3.3** Chapter is the governance body for the Cathedral, and comprises the Dean, Sub Dean, Canon Chancellor, two diocesan residentiary canons (Director of Mission and Ministry, and Director of Vocations), three Cathedral wardens, three further lay members (one of whom is also the Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel), and a Bishop's Nominee. The Chief Operating Officer (COO) attends all Chapter meetings.

**2.3.4** The Cathedral Safeguarding Committee is chaired by the Sub Dean and operates as a sub-committee of Chapter.

## **2.4 WHO WAS SEEN IN THIS AUDIT**

**2.4.1** The audit involved reviewing documentation, auditing case files, talking to people at the heart of safeguarding in the Cathedral – such as the Dean, Clergy and lay staff members, safeguarding staff, music leads, and people managing the floor of the Cathedral – and discussing safeguarding with a number of other individuals with a range of roles and responsibilities. The audit took place over three days.

**2.4.2** Further details are provided in the appendix.

### **Any limitations to audit**

**2.4.3** The auditors did undertake a site visit. However, due to the coronavirus pandemic and the partial national lockdown still in place throughout the period of this audit, certain aspects of the audits were necessarily different from those conducted in 2019/20:

- All conversations except one were conducted remotely via video calls.
- Focus groups were replaced by an electronic questionnaire which was widely distributed to children with close links to the Cathedral (such as choristers and servers) and adults in a range of roles across the cathedral community. These included staff, volunteers, chorister parents and members of the congregation. The questionnaires were used as the mechanism for seeking feedback on the awareness, understanding and impact of safeguarding arrangements across the Cathedral, and were returned by over 90 adults and children. Despite the excellent response, the inability of the auditors to hold follow-up discussions with respondents limited the depth of knowledge that could be gained from participants.

- It was not possible to watch Evensong, and so observe the pre- and post-service arrangements for choristers. One of the auditors was able to observe a morning rehearsal of the boys' choir, which enabled them to gain a degree of understanding of arrangements in place to support and safeguarding the choristers.

2.4.4 During some of the periods of lockdown during 2020 and early 2021, many Cathedral activities were suspended or reduced, and the boys and girls of the choirs did not sing. Significant numbers of staff were furloughed, and most volunteers were not active. Many have still not returned.

2.4.5 At the time of the audit, services and activities were gradually starting again, with adjustments in order to comply with post-lockdown requirements such as social distancing. This meant, for example, that choir practices were being held in the nave rather than in the song school; other activities were still taking place virtually rather than 'live'.

## 3. FINDINGS – PRACTICE

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### 3.1 SAFE ACTIVITIES AND WORKING PRACTICES

#### Precincts and buildings

##### *Description*

- 3.1.1 There are significant challenges to running a place of worship that welcomes a thousand worshippers each week, receives several hundred thousand visitors a year and is open to the public, some of whom may be vulnerable themselves, or a possible risk to others. Somewhere as well-known as St Albans Cathedral is also vulnerable to external threats.
- 3.1.2 The Cathedral is open from 7.30am to 5.30pm each weekday, with additional hours into the evening when there are specific events taking place. At the weekend, the Cathedral is open at 7.30am and closes after the conclusion of the final service of the day.
- 3.1.3 The safety and security of the Cathedral floor is the responsibility of a team of virgers comprising a full-time Head Virger, one full-time and three part-time virgers (totalling two full-time equivalent posts). They are identifiable by their uniform of black trousers, white shirt and black jacket, and by their lanyards. Two night porters work Monday to Friday between 7.00pm and 10pm. An additional part-time virger is called in on an ad hoc basis to cover holidays and other absences in the virger team, and at particularly demanding times of year, such as Christmas and Easter. The virgers are also responsible for the safety and security of buildings in the Cathedral precinct, including the offices in the former Deanery. Not all buildings in the precinct which are associated with the Cathedral have an alarm.
- 3.1.4 The virger team is comparatively inexperienced. The Head Virger was appointed in November 2019, only 10 months after joining the verger team. Two other members of the team took up their posts in 2020 and have spent much of the time since then on furlough. The team has never worked together when the Cathedral is operating as is 'normal'. All team members were safely recruited and are DBS checked. They have received basic induction and have undertaken foundation-level safeguarding training. The Head Virger has also completed C2. He has introduced a number of changes since becoming Head Virger, including a weekly team meeting, and a logbook for noting concerns, which helps in spotting patterns of visitors, behaviour, etc.
- 3.1.5 There are two entrances into the Cathedral. The recently developed Welcome Centre at the east end is the most heavily used, due to its proximity to the town. It includes the vestry and the Cathedral shop. It is covered by CCTV. The door between the Welcome Centre and the Cathedral cannot be locked as it is a fire door. The other entrance is at the west end and opens onto the grassed areas and parkland which stretch down towards the river. There is general encouragement to enter via the Welcome Centre.
- 3.1.6 The main nave area of the Cathedral is very open, with good visibility. The length of the nave (the longest in any English cathedral) means that there is a considerable distance between the west end and the more heavily trafficked areas of the Cathedral. The east end and north transept contain side chapels and other secluded areas where there is limited visibility and CCTV coverage. There is no CCTV coverage outside, apart from partial coverage overseen by the police. CCTV images are on the main server, but the lack of a separate screen in the vestry means that oversight of the images is not possible when the vestry computer is being used for other purposes.

- 3.1.7 The song school, classrooms, café and other rooms used for group activities are in the building alongside the Welcome Centre. All non-public areas are accessed via security keypads.
- 3.1.8 In normal circumstances, the shop is staffed between 10.00am and 4.45pm by three (volunteer) welcomers. The west end is sometimes staffed by welcomers, usually working in pairs, but is often left unstaffed. Shop staff have the use of a radio with which to call the virgers in case of any problems. Volunteers working in the rest of the Cathedral do not have access to a radio, and the mobile phone signal is unreliable.
- 3.1.9 Lay chaplains are on duty in the Cathedral for much of the time, providing a response to those who wish to speak with a member of the clergy. When they are available, members of the Cathedral clergy provide back up if needed.
- 3.1.10 The sheltered external porches at the west end are frequently used as an informal night refuge by members of the town's homeless community, some of whom occasionally enter the Cathedral. The virgers have vouchers for food and drink which they can give to those who need them.
- 3.1.11 No virgers live on site. Out-of-hours call-outs are managed by an external company, but in practice the auditors understand that their intervention tends to result in the Head Virger being called in to deal with whatever has occurred.
- 3.1.12 Use of an online communal diary across the Cathedral means that the virgers are aware of what events are planned, including school visits. Regular meetings are chaired by the Dean to flag up and plan for upcoming events.
- 3.1.13 The Head Virger has very recently joined the Cathedral Safeguarding Committee, which he regards as a positive development. The Head Virger showed confidence in the access and help he would get with any safeguarding concern from the CSO or the Acting Dean.
- 3.1.14 There is no lockdown procedure in place, and no lost-child procedure. People spoken with acknowledged the need to learn lessons from events elsewhere but were worried that they might induce anxiety amongst members of their community by addressing this explicitly.

### *Analysis*

- 3.1.15 The auditors concluded that many of the arrangements in place for ensuring the safety of the Cathedral are well understood and effective. There is further work to be done to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of all staff and volunteers, as well as visitors, are underpinned by agreed procedures. Some practical measures could be taken to improve safety.
- 3.1.16 The virger team is described as 'proactive' in averting potential difficulties with individuals who may be causing concern. The separation of the public from the non-public areas is sensible and effective. The Welcome Centre provides a roomy and pleasant way for people to enter the Cathedral and is well staffed during core hours by volunteers. The location of the vestry in this area is an additional benefit.
- 3.1.17 The majority (86 per cent) of staff, volunteers and congregants who responded to the questionnaire said they felt extremely or moderately safe in their cathedral activities. Nine per cent said they did not feel at all safe. Only 39 per cent were able to say that lone working was 'extremely' avoided in their role, whilst 6 per cent indicated that lone working was not avoided at all.
- 3.1.18 The virger team is small, and the area they oversee is very large. The hours when the Cathedral is open, and the usual hours worked by the welcome volunteers and day

chaplains, means that virgers can be on their own for extended periods of time. Parts of the Cathedral are isolated, and the thickness of the walls combined with the lack of availability of reliable means of communication (mobile phones, for example, do not work consistently within the Cathedral) means that individuals can feel far from assistance should they require it. This is a particular challenge at the west end, which is additionally vulnerable as there is a donation point there, and efforts are made to ensure that welcomers stationed at that door are always on duty in pairs. Although this area is covered by CCTV, this is not consistently monitored so is not an adequate measure in itself. The inability to lock the door between the Welcome Centre and the Cathedral itself makes it a challenge to ensure that there is nobody left in the building prior to locking up.

- 3.1.19** Due to the pandemic, and attendant lockdowns, this comparatively inexperienced virger team has not had opportunity to work together in normal circumstances. Despite this, the Head Virger has moved quickly to address areas which he perceived as potential weaknesses, in particular putting communications systems into place such as a weekly team meeting and an incident book. Dialogue with the CSO and relevant others to ensure that information kept is compliant with GDPR requirements, and is regularly reviewed for safeguarding concerns, would be helpful.
- 3.1.20** The Diocesan Guidelines on Lone Working and Personal Safety are not written specifically with the Cathedral in mind. There is significant emphasis on the use of mobile phones as a means of promoting personal safety, which is not appropriate for the Cathedral. Guidelines written with the Cathedral in mind, based on a realistic risk assessment of the particular challenges of the Cathedral and its precinct, together with the availability of staff to oversee safety, would be a useful addition to the Cathedral's procedures. The consideration of safe working practices in training sessions would be beneficial.
- 3.1.21** Whilst the sensitivity of maintaining the integrity of such an ancient building is appreciated, there may be opportunities to improve the CCTV coverage inside and outside the Cathedral which, together with improving the ability to monitor camera footage more closely, might assist in promoting safety. Alternatively, in the event that increasing CCTV coverage is considered undesirable, a review of how the various parts of the building are used could be useful, with the aim of enhancing safety and reducing risk, particularly for those (such as chaplains) who regularly work alone.
- 3.1.22** There is no procedure for responding to a lost child, although individuals described what their own response would be.
- 3.1.23** In the view of the auditors, more could be done to learn from the experiences of cathedrals and churches elsewhere in order to ensure that St Albans is better prepared for managing and responding to external threats.

#### **Questions for the Cathedral to consider**

- What practical steps could be taken to improve the safety and security of all those working in, using and enjoying the Cathedral and its surroundings?
- Who is best placed to develop procedures to promote consistent practices in relation to external threat, lone working and lost children?
- How confident is the Cathedral that there is sufficient capacity overall to ensure safety at the busiest of times?



## Vulnerable adults

### Description

- 3.1.24 St Albans Cathedral has always been a place of pilgrimage, and in normal times, welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors a year, in addition to its regular congregation of around 1,000 worshippers per week. As part of its mission, Chapter aspires to offer a warm welcome to all, and to be a place where everyone feels that they can belong.
- 3.1.25 Despite the affluence of the surroundings, as a place which offers a welcome and refuge to all, staff and volunteers regularly engage with those who may be considered vulnerable by virtue of their physical, emotional or mental health needs. This includes a growing number of homeless people and others living with addictions. Many within the Cathedral, including the virger team, are familiar with these individuals and know them by name. The use of the sheltered porches outside the west end of the Cathedral as a place to sleep is accepted.
- 3.1.26 As well as signposting to local services, there is a system in place for the virgers to provide vouchers for food and drink to those who need them, rather than money. Cathedral staff work in partnership with local agencies but are concerned that long-term solutions can be hard to find. As one respondent to the questionnaire commented:

*'The ability of cathedrals to support people's welfare is almost entirely dependent on agencies and charities outside the cathedral and, in turn, how well supported and funded those bodies are to offer the services and help to those people who come to cathedrals seeking help. A cathedral like St Albans has very little resource to directly help, although many members of the Cathedral support and volunteer for such agencies and charities.'*

- 3.1.27 For those who seek spiritual support, a system of day chaplains is in place throughout the year. Chaplains are ecumenical, safely recruited, and more recently have been required to have a DBS check. The day chaplains comprise both clergy and readers, and are coordinated by an honorary chaplain, who is a volunteer, overseen by Canon Chancellor. The nature of their task means that chaplains are on their own with individuals – one respondent to the questionnaire said that 'as a chaplain, lone working is the norm, but I know where help is if required'. The Canon Chancellor has recently decided to take the lead on safer recruitment. Despite the pressure to maintain a consistent presence of chaplains, newly recruited chaplains are not permitted to take up their role in the Cathedral in advance of all checks being completed.
- 3.1.28 A system of pastoral visitors is in place, overseen by the Sub Dean. Risk assessment indicates that pastoral visitors are safely recruited, DBS checked, safeguarding trained at foundation level, work to the diocesan Guidelines on Lone Working and Personal Safety and that they receive group supervision with the Sub Dean.
- 3.1.29 There was a general view that staff and volunteers would like to be more confident in responding to people in crisis. Chapter have committed to providing mental health training to frontline staff, which will be a helpful first step.
- 3.1.30 The Cathedral is very reliant on a team of 600–700 volunteers to maintain essential services ranging from very public duties of welcoming and guiding to less visible tasks. These volunteers are supported primarily by other volunteers who take this on as an additional duty and overseen by a volunteers' committee which is chaired by the

Sub Dean. Members of the clergy and staff also maintain oversight of volunteers associated with their areas of responsibility. There is recognition that volunteers on occasions may themselves be vulnerable or become so during the course of their work in the Cathedral, often by virtue of their age or health. This awareness has been sharpened by the pandemic, with many volunteers not yet feeling confident to return to their duties.

### *Analysis*

- 3.1.31** The auditors found that there is a high level of awareness across clergy and staff of the needs of vulnerable adults who visit the Cathedral, and a concern to respond positively whilst being cognisant of the need to balance concerns for an individual with the safety and wellbeing of other visitors. There is similar recognition of the potential for volunteers to become vulnerable. The plan to deliver mental health training to staff and volunteers will assist in providing a more confident and consistent response, but there remains a need to consider how to develop a more systematic oversight of and response to the most vulnerable individuals as well as support to staff and volunteers who have to deal with challenging individuals and incidents.
- 3.1.32** Ninety-six per cent of the individuals who responded to the questionnaire said that the Cathedral takes on a role in helping people who, due to personal circumstances or crises, need help to keep safe. This indicates an impressive level of awareness.
- 3.1.33** The virger team has valued the regular contact with and training received from the CSO. As a result of this, the team is aware of the needs of vulnerable adults and on occasions have approached the CSO or DSA to raise a concern, report an incident and seek advice. The virgers' incident book provides a reliable way of communicating concerns to each other, as well as providing oversight of what may be a deteriorating situation for an individual.
- 3.1.34** Safeguarding concerns received by the CSO indicate that staff regularly liaise with external agencies to provide support to vulnerable individuals, and that the police are called to help manage individuals who are presenting with challenging behaviour. This is usually by email following a difficult incident.
- 3.1.35** The virger team has identified a need for mental health training, which they are keen should proceed as soon as possible (it was postponed for 12 months due to the pandemic). The CSO is in the process of arranging this. More immediately, the possibility of initiating a system of debriefing following a serious or distressing incident might be a useful way of extracting and embedding learning as well as responding to the inevitable distress that accompanies such incidents.

### **Questions for the Cathedral to consider**

- What can be done to improve overall confidence in identifying and meeting the needs of vulnerable adults and responding well to those in crisis?

### **Children**

This section is about children who come to the Cathedral in various capacities. It does not cover choristers (see paragraphs 3.1.53-73), or children who bell ring (see paragraph 3.1.89).

### *Description*

- 3.1.36** Learning is at the heart of the mission of the Cathedral. It runs a rich programme for schools and adults and has become a nationally renowned centre for heritage and theological learning. It is ambitious to increase the range and diversity of people



engaged in learning (to include local non-attenders, wider diocese and region, millennials, Key stages 3 and 4, SEND groups) and aims to offer engaging experiences and opportunities to people of all ages, all levels of education, of all traditions and faiths. This aspect of the Cathedral's work is overseen by the Canon Chancellor. His team includes an education officer (with further teaching staff), an adult learning officer, and a community engagement officer.

- 3.1.37** Pre-COVID, the Cathedral was visited by around 14,000 children per year, from nursery to university age, coming from some 300 different settings (mainly primary and secondary schools). Family events are popular but restricted to around 20 children and their parents; the free Cathedral Trails cater for around 300 children and accompanying adults.
- 3.1.38** The Education Officer is an experienced former teacher who has been in his present role for more than nine years. He is supported by a group of three teachers who work term times, and a learning administrator. A team of around 35 volunteers support the schools programme. A further 30 work on the family learning programme. There is some overlap between the two groups of volunteers. Staff and designated volunteers are safely recruited and DBS checked.
- 3.1.39** The Learning Department has a comprehensive set of documents and procedures which includes a statement of purpose, mission and values; a training programme for volunteers (including safeguarding, review, appraisal); good practice points (including emergency procedures); risk assessments; review points and safeguarding responsibilities. There is clear guidance on when and how to report a concern.
- 3.1.40** Risk assessments and other relevant documentation are provided to schools to assist them in the safe planning of a visit, including specifying ratios of adults to children. When on site, school staff remain in charge of their group, supported by Learning Centre staff and volunteers. Groups primarily use the public areas in the Cathedral for activities and can also use the classroom in the non-public part of the building adjoining the Welcome Centre, where there are separate toilet and refreshment facilities. Members of the Virger team are reported to be proactive in averting the difficulties which occasionally arise when groups are in the public parts of the Cathedral.
- 3.1.41** The Cathedral diary is used to flag up when school visits are taking place. The monthly cross-departmental liaison meeting is used to plan for larger, one-off events.
- 3.1.42** The CSO delivered an initial training session for learning centre volunteers, all of whom have completed basic awareness (C0) training, and most have completed foundation (C1) training also. An annual team day and termly newsletters reinforce safeguarding messages.
- 3.1.43** The Cathedral has a dedicated youth chaplain whose role is to lead and develop the existing youth provision and encourage exploration of faith and positive life skills amongst young people, especially those aged 11–25. This brings to life a commitment to congregational growth set out in the Mission Action Plan for 2019–24 and builds on the already busy programme of activities for younger children and families.
- 3.1.44** The Youth Chaplain oversees a wide range of activities for children from birth upwards, which are delivered by a combination of paid sessional workers and volunteers. Activities range from Children's Church every Sunday to weekly tots and carers groups, an after-school group, for children aged between 7 and 11, and a group for older youths from year 7 upwards. There is also a group for people in their 20s and 30s. Some are free, and donations are requested for attendance at others. A weekly youth group has kept running throughout lockdown, using Zoom.

- 3.1.45 The numbers of children and young people benefitting from these activities and opportunities is increasing steadily, so much so that additional groups are being developed to accommodate them. This is a tribute to the dedication and energy of the Youth Chaplain and her team.
- 3.1.46 The Youth Chaplain is personally involved with most of the groups. Staff and volunteers for the groups are safely recruited and DBS checked. The CSO has been involved with the safer recruitment arrangements, but not with the details of how the groups are run, or the procedures which underpin them.
- 3.1.47 The Cathedral benefits from a number of young people who volunteer as servers. The auditors did not have opportunity to talk directly with anyone about this, but one young server did respond to the questionnaire. Their responses indicated that they felt safe, respected and well looked after, but a little uncertain about what would happen if they felt unwell during a service.

### *Analysis*

- 3.1.48 The auditors found that the arrangements to support school visits and family learning are well established and safe. Safeguarding and administrative arrangements for the separate children and youth activities are still developing and would benefit from systematic engagement with the CSO.
- 3.1.49 The system for arranging and conducting school visits and other activities led by the Learning Centre is firmly established and safe overall. During conversation with the auditors, the Education Officer identified a couple of areas where arrangements could be tightened up. These relate to visits by groups of more obviously vulnerable children (e.g. from SEND settings) and the need to ensure that the virger team and others are properly briefed.
- 3.1.50 The auditors identified a degree of potential confusion in the operation of safeguarding procedures. The Cathedral staff work to their own safeguarding policy, including reporting safeguarding concerns to the CSO, but it is not clear from documentation supplied to schools that the latter should continue to operate to their own safeguarding policy and guidelines. This would include the school remaining responsible for its own children at all times and taking responsibility for ensuring it had an adult: child ratio which was fully Ofsted compliant, rather than relying on the Cathedral to ensure this was the case. This is standard good practice and could easily be incorporated into existing documentation and guidance.
- 3.1.51 School groups spend most of their time in the public spaces of the Cathedral, alongside members of the public who are visiting. Groups of children dressing up in period costumes and enjoying themselves are of understandable interest and people often wish to take photographs of them. Signage prohibiting photography is only displayed during choir rehearsals, however, meaning that staff and volunteers have constantly to be alert to the need to intervene with people who do not realise they should not be taking photos of the children. This could be at least partially addressed if signage were constantly on display which sets out where and when the taking of photographs is permissible.
- 3.1.52 The activities for children and young people run under the oversight of the Youth Chaplain have been very successful and numbers have grown quickly. They encompass a wide range of different types of activities, most of which involve children being left in the care of the Cathedral. Procedures and practices underpinning the groups – record keeping, risk assessments, consent forms, responding to concerns, etc. – are evolving, but do not reflect the standards of safeguarding practice in longer-established areas of activity, in other departments of the Cathedral. On occasions the

Youth Chaplain has had to respond to problems which have arisen in the absence of clear guidance, for example about parental responsibilities. The CSO has not been involved in assisting with developing practice standards, although she does have oversight of reported incidents and concerns. This is an area of vulnerability which potentially leaves children, the Cathedral and individuals exposed to risk.

#### Questions for the Cathedral to consider

- What additional measures are needed to support improvements in the safety and wellbeing of children attending the Cathedral's activities?
- How confident is the Cathedral that safeguarding procedures and practice in its children's and youth activities are aligned with best practice in the Learning Centre?
- How might the CSO best support the Youth Chaplain in identifying and responding to the needs of vulnerable attendees at the children's and youth groups?

### Choirs

**3.1.53** All cathedral choirs raise particular safeguarding issues, particularly for children. As young children, sometimes away from home, working towards a highly prized goal, firstly, there is the vulnerability of choristers to being groomed by people in positions of trust within the choir context; secondly, the demands of 'regular public performance, in some contexts to elite standards, can be in tension or conflict with child welfare requirements and expectations.

#### *Description*

**3.1.54** There is a strong musical tradition in St Albans Cathedral, which is continued today with a Cathedral choir of boys and male lay clerks, St Albans Cathedral Girls' Choir, Abbey Singers and parish and young people's choirs and an orchestra. The Master of the Music (MoM) oversees these choirs with the help of the Assistant Master of the Music (AMoM), and they are supported by an organ scholar.

**3.1.55** The MoM has been in his post since 1998, having previously been Assistant Director of Music at St Paul's Cathedral. He works directly to the Dean and heads up an all-male team comprising himself, the AMoM, and the Organ Scholar. The (female) chaperone, who is a choir parent, joined the team four years ago following encouragement by the CSO, replacing a system of wholly voluntary chaperones drawn from amongst choir parents. She is contracted to work for 20 hours each week. The main chaperone is supported by a dedicated Girls' Choir Chaperone (who is a volunteer) and, for this academic year, a Music and Youth Intern.

**3.1.56** The Boys' Choir is for boys aged between 8 and 14 and comprises 14 boys and eight probationers at present and is led by the MoM. The boys sing for 17 hours each week, rehearsing six times and singing five services. For three weekend services they are joined by up to 12 lay clerks – professional musicians who sing the lower parts. There is no residential choir school: the choristers are drawn from local schools. Weekday rehearsals take place before or after school.

**3.1.57** The Girls' Choir also comprises 14 choristers and eight probationers aged between 7 and 14 and is led by the AMoM. Like the boys, girl choristers are drawn from local primary and secondary schools. The choir sings Evensong twice a week, and like the boys the choristers are drawn from many local schools. The girls sing for 10 hours each week – they rehearse three times each week, before or after school and sing certain weekend services each term alongside the lay clerks.

- 3.1.58 The Organ Scholar leads the Abbey Singers (which is for former choristers and others aged 14 and above). This offers choristers an opportunity to continue to enjoy singing to a high standard beyond the end of their choristerships. Membership is by invitation
- 3.1.59 St Albans Young Singers (for children aged between 7 and 11) is led by a paid music director, assisted by the Music and Youth Intern and the Organ Scholar. The Parish Singers is for adults and is led by the chair of the Music Trust.
- 3.1.60 All staff are DBS checked and safely recruited. The MoM has also introduced DBS checking for all regular lay clerks, the reason for this being that they may be in a supervisory capacity with children on tours and at concerts away from the Cathedral; they have no day-to-day supervisory responsibilities. The lay clerks have separate facilities from the child choristers.
- 3.1.61 Staff and lay clerks undertake safeguarding training. Occasional lay clerks who do not comply with safeguarding training requirements are removed from the list of available singers.
- 3.1.62 Since taking up post, the MoM has introduced a number of changes in routines which have promoted the safety of the choristers, and there will be further benefits once the choir is able to take up residence in the new song school which is in the non-public part of the building adjoining the Welcome Centre. This has a rehearsal space, a choir library, areas for robing and gathering before and after services, and is adjacent to the education facilities with separate kitchen and toilet facilities.
- 3.1.63 Singing lessons are conducted in the Deanery offices by sessional singing teachers.
- 3.1.64 Choristers either make their own way to and from the Cathedral (with documented parental consent) or are brought by car. Parking facilities adjoining the Deanery offices mean that parents and carers have no difficulty in parking close by the Cathedral. The Chaperone keeps a register and notes when children arrive and depart.
- 3.1.65 During lockdown, choir rehearsals continued through use of Zoom, with safeguarding guidelines being developed to ensure this was done safely. At the time of the audit, choir rehearsals had just restarted as lockdown restrictions were being eased but were taking place in the Cathedral nave rather than the song school in order that social distancing requirements were fully met. The move to the song school is eagerly anticipated but will only take place once national regulations permit.
- 3.1.66 The choir chaperone attends rehearsals and services and has responsibility for assuring the welfare of the choristers, supervising them whilst in the Cathedral, registering their attendance and managing medical and other needs. The Music and Youth Intern provides much valued assistance, particularly to the Girls' Choir and Abbey Singers. When choristers arrive for a rehearsal or service, they are greeted by the chaperone or by another member of department staff, and a similar arrangement is in place for collections by parents. During services, the chaperone sits within clear view of the choristers and provides support should a chorister need to leave the floor for any reason. The chaperone also has some responsibility for overseeing singing lessons, although this presents some practical difficulties when times overlap with choir rehearsals and services.
- 3.1.67 A fortnightly Safeguarding Meeting, attended by the MoM, the AMoM, the Organ Scholar and the chaperone, was introduced around 18 months ago, with the aim of enhancing communication and coordinating safeguarding arrangements across the choirs. Individual children are discussed on occasions, though not all are systematically considered. Notes are taken by the chaperone and kept in a locked cabinet in the departmental office.

- 3.1.68** The chaperone conducts a risk assessment in respect of any child who may have additional vulnerabilities (e.g. a health condition) and keeps an individual log for each child about whom there is a concern. She will approach the Sub Dean (rather than the CSO) in the event of concerns increasing, as the latter is readily accessible. The chaperone can seek advice and support from her colleagues but does not receive regular support and supervision.
- 3.1.69** The Music Department produces annually a Handbook for Choristers and Parents for the boys' and girls' choirs respectively. This contains useful information about choir routines, requirements and expectations of both children and their parents, together with the names of music department staff and significant others (including the Sub Dean, Precentor and CSO). Contact details other than for the MoM, the Canon Precentor, the song school and the Departmental Secretary are not given. The handbook does not contain any safeguarding information. The Master of Music meets with choir parents as a group at the beginning of each school year. The chaperone is not included in this meeting, nor the CSO, which is an opportunity missed for introducing them and the general topic of safeguarding to parents.
- 3.1.70** The Music Department has a range of risk assessments in place which detail risks and how these should be mitigated, and a safeguarding policy for lay clerks which sets out key principles, expectations about behaviour, and information about when and how to report a concern.
- 3.1.71** One of the 10 who returned a questionnaire added the comment: 'I love our choir'.

### *Analysis*

- 3.1.72** Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the cathedral choirs are well developed but need attention to ensure that high standards are consistently applied in all settings. The highly differentiated responsibilities between departmental staff inhibits the ability of the MoM to maintain oversight of safeguarding and welfare across all music activities. More can be done to align practice across the choirs, improve communication between departmental staff, clarify the respective responsibilities of parents, volunteers and staff, and raise the profile of safeguarding.
- 3.1.73** All child choristers who responded to the questionnaire (10 in total) said they feel safe during services, rehearsals and performances, are treated with respect and are confident that their worries would be listened to and that they would be helped. All felt extremely (10) or moderately (1) well cared for on trips. Eighty-two per cent said that adults dealt with bullying extremely well and 18 per cent said moderately well. One commented that they had been bullied a couple of times and mentioned it to a member of staff, but it had not been dealt with.
- 3.1.74** Fifty-five per cent of children felt that the balance between choir rehearsals and services, schoolwork, seeing friends and other hobbies was extremely good; 45 per cent thought it was only moderately good. Auditors noted the imbalance in demands and expectations of the boys' and girls' choirs, given that the children are the same age and from the same school year groups. The greater emphasis on the boys' choir – referred to as 'the Cathedral Choir' - could have the unintended effect of creating a perceived hierarchy of merit. Imbalances and inequity risk individuals feeling their voices are not equally valued and so become less likely to raise concerns.
- 3.1.75** Oversight of the welfare of the children in the choirs is seen as the responsibility of the chaperone. The introduction of a paid chaperone is a very positive step, and although there have been some tensions arising from her position as a choir parent, the children are clearly confident with her and feel safe. Both the MoM and the chaperone feel that their partnership in looking after the children has become more effective over



time. Further thought needs to be given to whether it is realistic to expect the chaperone to maintain oversight of individual singing lessons as well as chorister rehearsals.

- 3.1.76 The decision to introduce DBS and safeguarding training for lay clerks has been helpful. The auditors wondered whether a separate safeguarding policy for the lay clerks was desirable or necessary, given the overall Cathedral safeguarding policy, and whether it could be replaced with a code of conduct against which lay clerks could be regularly appraised.
- 3.1.77 The range of procedures and risk assessments in place in the Music Department is good and covers important areas of activity. Auditors wondered how familiar everyone is with the risk assessments, all of which have been developed by the chaperone, and how they are used in practice.
- 3.1.78 As noted above, rehearsals are currently taking place in the nave to enable appropriate social distancing. Arrangements here would benefit from some tightening up. For example, as rehearsals take place at times when the Cathedral doors are already open to the public, the virger team could usefully be engaged in managing entrances and exits as well as ensuring that the chaperone is not distracted from her responsibilities by having to respond to members of the public who may approach the choir during rehearsal time.
- 3.1.79 The auditors observed that arrangements for the arrival and departure of children, which would be straightforward in a smaller area, were poorly managed in that larger area. It was unclear to the auditors at what point parents and Music Department staff assumed and relinquished responsibility for the children, who were able to enter and leave by one of two exits which were both at a distance from where the choir was rehearsing. The same lack of clarity about parental responsibility applies to individual singing lessons. A couple of complaints from parents indicate that this was problematic prior to lockdown.
- 3.1.80 The auditors observed that the areas of responsibility in the Music Department are highly differentiated, e.g. across the different choirs and between music and welfare, and that this both inhibits communication and is an area of potential vulnerability. The fortnightly safeguarding meeting is a positive step forward in addressing this, but auditors think that more could be done. The regular inclusion of the CSO in the safeguarding meeting would, in the opinion of the auditors, be beneficial, as would systematic consideration, together with the CSO, of the wellbeing of every child in the choirs. Regular supervision for the chaperone and any other assistants (such as the music intern) would be desirable, potentially by the CSO, to enable regular discussion of any concerns and promote a consistent response.
- 3.1.81 The auditors wondered whether the decision to allocate leadership of the Abbey Singers (which is for former choristers in their mid to late teens) to the youngest and least experienced of the music department staff, took sufficient account of the need to protect both the children in the choir and its leader. This age group can be particularly challenging to work with, and issues of discipline, authority and boundaries can be problematic for even the most experienced leaders in settings where roles are more clearly differentiated than in a Cathedral (such as a school). The auditors are conscious that they did not have the opportunity to check this out in conversation, however.
- 3.1.82 Some of the choirs and other musical activities are led by individuals from outside the Music Department. Thought should be given to how these individuals could be included in relevant meetings, with the aim of ensuring that safeguarding arrangements and procedures are aligned across all musical activities.

- 3.1.83** Communication with parents is responsive to request, and the handbooks are useful. Auditors wondered whether the annual meeting could include both the chaperone and the CSO, in order to raise the profile of safeguarding in this important area of Cathedral activity.
- 3.1.84** At present there is no system in place for seeking views and feedback from children and parents. The response to the questionnaire indicates that this might be welcomed and could give rise to useful feedback which will enhance the experience of all.

#### Questions for the Cathedral to consider

- How might the safeguarding arrangements for the choir rehearsals and singing lessons be strengthened, including arrangements with parents/ carers for drop-off and collection?
- How might the Master of Music be supported in his responsibilities as the person ultimately accountable for ensuring high safeguarding and welfare standards are consistently maintained across the entire Music Department, and concerns are appropriately identified and responded to?
- How might the Cathedral seek feedback from choristers and parents in order to be assured that arrangements for their safety and wellbeing are working as well as possible?
- How might the CSO best be used to support Music Department staff, including the chaperone, in assuring the safety and wellbeing of children in the choirs?
- What else could be done to raise the profile of safeguarding and the CSO in the Music Department?

### Bell ringing

#### *Description*

- 3.1.85** The 13 bells in the bell tower are rung and maintained by the St Albans Cathedral Society of Change Ringers, who climb the 160 steps to reach the ringing chamber twice on a Sunday and for their practices on Tuesday evenings. The tower can be accessed (securely, via keypads) from inside and outside the Cathedral. The team comprises 16 adults, across a wide age range, six of whom have DBS checks. Recent joiners have been safely recruited. Young people under 18 have rung with the team in the past, and there is a hope that more will join in the future.
- 3.1.86** The Ringing Master has been in his role more than 10 years, having been a member of the team since 1989. His deputy has had a similarly lengthy involvement with the Cathedral and the tower, having been ringing since 1978 and deputy for more than 10 years also. Both are DBS checked.
- 3.1.87** The bell ringers have embraced their safeguarding responsibilities and have worked closely with the CSO to ensure their working practices are as safe as possible. A comprehensive health and safety risk assessment is in place, supplemented by safeguarding guidelines (dated March 2021) which relate to the Cathedral safeguarding policy and set out details of safe working practices and details how to raise a concern.
- 3.1.88** All ringers have undertaken C0 (foundation) safeguarding training. The Ringing Master and deputy have both undertaken C2 and safer recruitment training in addition. Used to being relatively isolated from the rest of the Cathedral, they are well

aware of the need to work safely. Access to the tower is protected by keypad with a carefully guarded code, and a tick sheet at the bottom of the steps means that the virgers always know who is up in the tower. A register is also kept. Ringers are seldom on their own in the tower.

- 3.1.89 Young ringers are taught only by ringers who are DBS checked. Parents are welcomed and are required to attend at least one session with their child before teaching commences.
- 3.1.90 Visiting ringers are required to declare and abide by any relevant safeguarding restrictions they may be subject to in their home area. Visiting individuals and groups are expected to confirm in writing that their visit complies with the Cathedral's safeguarding policies and procedures.
- 3.1.91 The attendance by the Ringing Master at regular diary update meetings helps keep the team engaged with what is going on in the Cathedral as a whole. The deputy Ringing Master has recently joined the CSC, which has raised the visibility of the tower in safeguarding terms.

### *Analysis*

- 3.1.92 The auditors judged the safeguarding procedures and practices in the bell tower to be strong and comprehensive. The hard work and commitment of the officers in the tower, working together with the CSO, is evident. The engagement of the Ringing Master at key meetings helps to offset the potential for isolation that is inevitable in an environment that is physically removed from the main areas of the Cathedral.
- 3.1.93 The inclusion of consideration relating to visiting ringers when the risk assessment is next reviewed would make it even more comprehensive.

### **Questions for the Cathedral to consider**

- There are no considerations regarding the bell tower.

## **3.2 CASE WORK (INCLUDING INFORMATION SHARING)**

- 3.2.1 When safeguarding concerns are reported, a timely response is needed to make sense of the situation, assess risk and decide what action needs to be taken, including whether statutory services need to be informed. In a Cathedral context, this includes helping to distinguish whether there are safeguarding elements to the situations of people receiving pastoral support.
- 3.2.2 The auditors judged that case work at St Albans Cathedral is good overall. Safeguarding agreements are thorough and well managed. Lower-level concerns are recorded and managed less systematically; work is needed to ensure that information is recorded clearly, in a way that supports regular oversight, and shared in a way that is timely and consistently compliant with GDPR requirements.
- 3.2.3 Information about where to report a concern is clearly displayed on posters in both public and private areas of the Cathedral. There is a dedicated safeguarding mailbox which is monitored by the CSO. As the CSO is a volunteer and part-time, concerns are commonly directed to the clergy, particularly the Sub Dean.
- 3.2.4 Case work in the cathedral is delivered by the CSO, working closely with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA). The Sub Dean passes on any lower level concerns reported in the first instance to her as Cathedral Safeguarding Lead to the CSO, who in turn consults with the DSA if appropriate for further advice.



- 3.2.5 The auditors looked at eight cases where the DSA alone or the DSA and CSO together were involved. A further four files relating to cases handled within the Cathedral were looked at in detail, and a number of others reviewed briefly. These latter related to both children and adults.

### **Quality of recording practice**

- 3.2.6 Good quality recording is essential to being able to make sense of the development of situations over time, to allow cross-referencing between files, and so that others can pick up work as and when necessary, and readily understand what they are dealing with. The DSA keeps individual electronic files for each active case with which he is involved. The CSO also maintains an electronic file.
- 3.2.7 All case files seen were up to date, but in no case was it easy to find basic details about the subject, the date, source and reason for referral, names and contact details of key people involved, and a summary of the present position. This could easily be rectified by the introduction of a basic 'front sheet', pending the anticipated introduction of a national electronic system for case management. This should make clear when a case is being actively worked with by the DSA.
- 3.2.8 Lower-level concerns are on the Cathedral system by name of subject, and consist primarily of collections of emails, together with a useful word document which contains a brief summary of the case.
- 3.2.9 For cases of lower-level concerns which are not actively managed by the CSO, a simple spreadsheet, maintained by or accessible to the CSO, detailing similar key information, including the response, would enable systematic oversight by the CSO and assist in spotting any emerging patterns of concern.
- 3.2.10 The auditors heard of information about individuals being held in different departments, e.g. in incident or complaints logs, and would suggest that this practice is reviewed by the CSO to ensure compliance with GDPR requirements.

### **Effectiveness of responses to vulnerable people or anyone in crises**

- 3.2.11 The auditors looked at three case files concerning individuals who received a coordinated response from the CSO and DSA. All concerned vulnerable adults, two of whom self-referred. The other case was referred by a member of the Cathedral clergy. Both the CSO and DSA kept a separate file in respect of each case. These cases were followed up in more detailed conversations with individuals involved.
- 3.2.12 All three cases demonstrated that the CSO and DSA are working well together, and that the CSO is applying an appropriate threshold for passing cases to the DSA. In one case, both CSO and DSA correctly identified the need to follow the procedures for responding to allegations against a church officer and did so thoroughly. Each file demonstrated that the views of the subject were actively sought and listened to, and each received a compassionate and appropriate response. In one case, the auditors wondered whether a referral to mental health services would have been appropriate.
- 3.2.13 Cases seen about lower-level concerns related to both children and adults. Those concerning children came primarily from the Music Department. Concerns were usually raised with the Sub Dean, who invariably sought advice appropriately and promptly from the CSO which in turn was always sound and accepted. Tensions in the Music Department about when it was appropriate to report concerns to the CSO or Sub Dean were evident but appear to have been resolved more recently.
- 3.2.14 Concerns regarding adults were similarly appropriate and demonstrated good awareness amongst staff and clergy of potential vulnerabilities, particularly relating to poor mental health. The majority originated from the virger team or from clergy.

- 3.2.15 After reviewing files and talking with numerous individuals, the auditors wondered whether there is still a tendency for potential referrers to feel anxious about referring and believe that they should make a judgment about whether abuse was happening or likely, rather than simply relaying a concern to the CSO who is in a better position to make such an assessment. This will doubtless be addressed as training continues but may be helped by introducing a standard means of reporting a concern which will include basic information about the nature of the concern and who it is about.

### **Effectiveness of risk assessments, safeguarding agreements and the risk management plan**

- 3.2.16 Safeguarding agreements (SAs) are a key mechanism to support offenders, wishing to attend church, to do so safely. They should be underpinned by a risk assessment that details the risks posed by a worshipper, the measures in place to manage those risks, and therefore the reasons for the SA. Having a clear rationale for any restrictions helps people enforce the agreements with the level of diligence appropriate SAs. Clarity about the risks that a safeguarding agreement is intended to address also allows for a robust reviewing process, which allows safeguarding agreements to be strengthened where needed, or indeed terminated if appropriate.
- 3.2.17 The auditors looked at all five SAs that are current for the Cathedral. Each was contained in an electronic file, kept by the DSA, which consisted of dated risk assessments and safeguarding agreements. The composition of the files made it easy to see the pattern of regular (usually annual) review of the risk assessment and the ensuing updated SA.
- 3.2.18 All five cases contained risk assessments, the standard of which improved significantly over time. Reviews of the risk assessments were up to date, but not all had been translated into an updated SA (these were during the pandemic and lockdown). Risk assessments showed careful consideration of risk and protective factors, positive engagement with the subject and commendable consideration of the public messages which would be given if the subject were permitted to take a public-facing role which implied they were a person of trust. One showed prompt and appropriate follow-up and review when a breach of the SA became known.
- 3.2.19 SAs seen were clear and proportionate, and some detailed consequences for non-compliance. Each specified an appropriately small reference group who would support the subject in keeping to the terms of the agreement. Files indicated good liaison with relevant other (usually public protection) agencies and places of worship. One file contained a photograph of the subject; another contained a signed permission from the subject for a photograph to be taken, which is good practice, but not the actual photograph.
- 3.2.20 The files were clearly labelled and easy to navigate, but the 'story of the case' itself was more difficult to determine. This was exacerbated by the tendency to use the risk assessment proforma to include detailed updates at each annual review, including copied emails. This made it difficult to see exactly what the current assessment was. In the meantime, introduction of a basic 'front sheet', as noted in paragraph 3.2.7 above, would assist, as would a means of recording details of email correspondence, meetings, etc.
- 3.2.21 The auditors were concerned that, given the very small reference groups associated with each person subject of a SA, and in the absence of photographs, that key people who might need to be alert to the presence of these individuals in the Cathedral (such as the Head Virger and team) may not recognise who they are.

**Quality of engagement with the people who disclose abuse, share concerns of unsafe people or practice, or ask for help to keep safe for any reason including use of any targeted resources.**

**3.2.22** An important part of the audit was speaking to people who had come forward to disclose abuse, share concerns, or expected help from the Cathedral to keep safe for any reason, to find out how timely, compassionate and effective they had found responses and support provided by the Cathedral. The Cathedral made this possible by publicising the audit so that people could contact SCIE.

**3.2.23** Unfortunately, nobody came forward to speak with the auditors, who are therefore unable to comment on this area other than through the reading of relevant case files. The files seen which relate to this area show close adherence to procedures and careful attention to the allegations. One case, relating to an incident of historic abuse by a church officer, was outstanding in the sensitivity shown to the person concerned, who expressed their satisfaction with the response by the CSO and the Church.

**Information sharing practice (including within the Cathedral, with linked Diocese, with statutory agencies, with other places of worship [i.e. when someone about whom there are concerns moves])**

**3.2.24** Files seen demonstrate good and prompt information sharing between Cathedral and Diocese, and between the CSO and others involved, including other places of worship, and statutory agencies. The practice of sharing concerns via email, with copies sent to a number of others, may need to be reviewed to ensure that staff, particularly, are aware of good information-sharing practice and GDPR. Meetings at which personal information is shared should equally be checked for compliance and notes checked to ensure that key information is all reflected on the case file, where one exists.

#### **Questions for the Cathedral to consider**

- What needs to be done to ensure that all files and records of safeguarding and welfare concerns are of a good standard, contain all basic information and are regularly monitored and reviewed?
- How confident is the Cathedral that all staff and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities to share safeguarding and welfare concerns with the CSO and how might such reporting be enabled?

### **3.3 CDM**

**3.3.1** The auditors did not see any clergy disciplinary measure files as part of this audit.

#### **Questions for the Cathedral to consider**

- There are no considerations under this heading.

### **3.4 TRAINING**

**3.4.1** Safeguarding training is an important mechanism for establishing safeguarding awareness and confidence throughout the Cathedral. It requires good quality substance, based on up-to-date evidence, with relevant case studies, engaging and relevant to the audience. It also requires strategic planning to identify priority groups for training, details the training needs/requirements of people in different roles, and an

implementation plan for training over time that tracks what training has been provided, who attended and who still needs to attend or requires refresher sessions.

### Description

- 3.4.2 The Cathedral uses training provided by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST), which primarily comprises the core training modules specified in the Church of England's *Practice Guidance: Safeguarding Training and Development*. DSAP maintains a close interest in safeguarding training, and meeting minutes indicate that a new training strategy and action plan is being developed in response to Past Cases Review 2 (PCR2). The Cathedral recruited four volunteer trainers which add to the capacity in the DST.
- 3.4.3 Chapter requires all staff and volunteers to complete basic awareness training (formerly C0). This was initially delivered by the CSO but is now available online. Without this, volunteers are no longer permitted to work within the Cathedral. The comprehensive records kept by the Safeguarding & Volunteers Assistant show that almost all volunteers and staff have now completed this. A few volunteers are no longer active in the Cathedral, having not completed the training.
- 3.4.4 Where relevant to the role, foundation training (formerly C1) has been completed by numerous staff since December 2018. Leaders and managers have completed C2 in the past two years. All clergy had completed C3 and/or C4 training, and the revised C4 training, which is intended to be delivered face to face, is eagerly awaited.
- 3.4.5 Safer recruitment training has been completed by a number of staff involved in recruitment, with others booked to undertake training during 2021. A small number of clergy have completed training on domestic abuse.
- 3.4.6 The CSO has delivered bespoke training to groups of staff, including the virgers and the bell ringers. This has been tailored to the particular work context and has been highly valued. She has also contributed to the induction of large numbers of staff and volunteers.
- 3.4.7 Attention has been paid to promoting training in advance through an extensive communications campaign. After encountering initial resistance amongst some groups, the message focused on raising awareness of safeguarding, and this proved successful in engaging those who were more reluctant. Direct 'hands-on' support is provided to those who, for various reasons, are not able to access online training without assistance. Eighty-two per cent of all the adults who responded to the questionnaire said that the safeguarding training they received from the Cathedral was 'extremely' or 'moderately' adequate for their role.
- 3.4.8 A small number of those interviewed described being upset and shocked by the content of some of the training and would have appreciated having the opportunity for debriefing from someone suitably skilled and knowledgeable.
- 3.4.9 Training records are kept by the Diocese for all clergy, by the Business Manager for staff and by the Volunteer Coordinator for all volunteers from the Cathedral. Both the Business Manager and the Volunteer Coordinator maintain accurate records which show all safeguarding training undertaken and when refresher training is due.
- 3.4.10 The efforts of the Safeguarding & Volunteers Assistant have meant that, for the first time, there is a single central record of all the hundreds of volunteers across the Cathedral; records had previously been held by group leaders with responsibility for specific areas of activity. This is a significant asset for the Cathedral.
- 3.4.11 The Cathedral has identified a significant need for mental health training for frontline staff, both to enhance its response to vulnerable adults, and in recognition of the

impact of the pandemic on many people. This will be an asset.

### *Analysis*

- 3.4.12** The auditors found that the Cathedral has been very successful in ensuring that all its staff and volunteers have undertaken basic safeguarding awareness training, and that specific groups have received more specialist training relevant to their roles, some of which has been provided directly by the CSO. There would be benefits in adopting a more planned approach to training delivery and evaluation of impact, and in regular reporting of progress.
- 3.4.13** The promotion of safeguarding training by the Cathedral has been very effective in ensuring wide take-up. Recognition of the anxiety and resistance initially induced in many at the prospect of undertaking training on safeguarding was helpful in ensuring that communications were positively focused on raising awareness.
- 3.4.14** The provision of training by the Diocese is a good service and helps to ensure that the Cathedral does not operate too independently. That said, with the majority of training currently only available online, this inhibits the consideration of scenarios relevant to the Cathedral context, which in turn may affect its impact. A resumption of face-to-face, or at least more interactive training, will hopefully take place as lockdown measures are eased. Training will be important to consider in the discussions about the service level agreement, including the implications of the new national Learning and Development Framework on capacity.
- 3.4.15** Bespoke training delivered by the CSO has been well received but has helped to promote good safeguarding practice in those groups with which she has been engaged. This was evident to the auditors.
- 3.4.16** Whilst records indicate that specific groups of clergy, staff and volunteers receive different levels of training, as specified in national guidance, the Cathedral does not have a training strategy or delivery plan. As awareness and practice develop, and national requirements change, this may prove useful in assisting the Cathedral to focus its attention on identifying training needs amongst different groups and provide a basis for more regular progress reporting to the CSC and elsewhere. Further developing this to incorporate a system for evaluating the impact of training, possibly in conjunction with existing systems for supervision and performance review, would provide assurance that training is having the desired effect. An additional refinement would be to consider making a debriefing available on request for those who found the content of training to be upsetting or otherwise disturbing and this would be welcomed by many.
- 3.4.17** The work done to set up a database to track training delivery and take-up has been invaluable. The system as it stands, however, is based on spreadsheets which are manually interrogated and do not relate to other relevant databases (such as DBS and other basic HR records). Given the high numbers of staff and volunteers working for the Cathedral, this is a disadvantage which would be useful to address. The model of the Single Central Record used in schools might be relevant to consider and is likely to be familiar to many.

### **Questions for the Cathedral to consider**

- How might a safeguarding training plan help the Cathedral assure itself that all staff and volunteers are receiving the right training at the right time, delivered in the most effective way, and that this is having a positive impact?



## 3.5 SAFER RECRUITMENT

### *Description*

- 3.5.1 Safer recruitment practice is an essential part of the Church of England's approach to safeguarding. National practice guidance was first issued in 2013, and has subsequently been updated, with the most recent guidance issued in 2016. Its principles are applicable in all recruitment, whether are not posts being recruited to are ones which involve direct contact with children or adults at risk.
- 3.5.2 Recruitment in St Albans is undertaken by clergy, lay staff and some volunteers. The majority of clergy, and some senior managers have undertaken safer recruitment training, with others booked to attend in coming months. DBS checks are renewed every five years.
- 3.5.3 Records of all staff and volunteers together with their DBS status, are kept centrally. Clergy DBS checks are undertaken by the Diocese and a record of these is kept by the Safeguarding & Volunteers Assistant for the Cathedral. Individual HR files are kept centrally for staff by the COO; HR records of volunteers are kept by group leaders, some of whom are themselves volunteers.
- 3.5.4 The CSO is consulted over which posts require a DBS check, and at what level. The CSO and DSA are consulted if a DBS check is blemished. All posts which require a DBS check are recruited to using safer recruitment guidance. This means that one of the people trained in safer recruitment forms part of the appointments panel. Application forms are used, two references are requested and taken up prior to interview, and a confidential declaration is completed. A safeguarding question is asked at interview and responses are recorded and kept on file.
- 3.5.5 Recruitment to posts (both staff and volunteers) where DBS checks are not required are not subject to safer recruitment principles and practice, although the auditors understand that most posts now include use of a confidential declaration in the recruitment process.
- 3.5.6 Applicants for volunteer posts have an initial interview with a member of the volunteers' committee, to determine what role would be most appropriate for their interests and skills. A second interview is then held involving a panel more specific to the potential role. References may be taken up, depending on the role.
- 3.5.7 The auditors viewed seven recruitment files, four for volunteers and three for staff. All the staff posts required a DBS, as did three of the four volunteer roles. The files indicate that safer recruitment practice was followed in all cases, including the take up of references, use of a confidential declaration and inclusion of a safeguarding question at interview. There were no relevant clergy blue files.

### *Analysis*

- 3.5.8 Auditors found that safer recruitment practice is working well in many areas, but that there remain significant gaps and inconsistencies in practice. The absence of a single central record restricts the ability of the Cathedral easily to monitor the standards of safer recruitment practice, and the absence of a centralised HR record-keeping system is a vulnerability. A safer recruitment approach should be applied for all staff and volunteer appointments.
- 3.5.9 Safer recruitment is the first step in developing a robust safeguarding culture. A safeguarding statement in every role description, a suitable question at every interview, the inclusion of a statement about safeguarding in every contract, a requirement to undertake basic awareness training as part of induction, and the systematic use of a confidential declaration for applicants all help in promoting a message that safeguarding is everybody's business.

- 3.5.10** St Albans Cathedral has made good progress in applying safer recruitment guidance, taking a very positive approach to the use of DBS checks across a wide range of posts, and ensuring that senior clergy and staff have undertaken safer recruitment training. Where posts have been designated as requiring DBS and hence safer recruitment, practice is good and centrally kept records reflect this. However, it was unclear to the auditors whether there has been a systematic review of all staff and volunteer posts to ascertain which post needs a DBS check and at what level.
- 3.5.11** The Cathedral faces a particular challenge in relation to the recruitment of volunteers. In the absence of a dedicated post with the responsibility to oversee volunteer recruitment, appointments sit with group leaders, some of whom are also volunteers, supported and assisted by a Volunteers' Committee which is chaired by the Sub Dean. Auditors did not see individual records but wondered in these circumstances what the arrangements were for keeping the personal files of volunteers secure. Auditors found confusion about whether all posts should be safely recruited to, and it was reported that some volunteers had been appointed without references being sought or taken up, for example. In the view of auditors, this is not compliant with the national safer recruitment policy and should be rectified as a priority.
- 3.5.12** It was not clear from the records in two cases that all checks had been completed before new staff took up their post. Whilst auditors were assured that this had not been the case, it points to the need for improved record keeping to demonstrate full compliance with safer recruitment guidance and practice.
- 3.5.13** As noted above in relation to training, the absence of a single central HR record for everyone working at the Cathedral inhibits the ability to monitor consistency of practice and compliance with procedures.

#### **Questions for the Cathedral to consider**

- What steps need to be taken to ensure that St Albans Cathedral becomes consistently compliant with all aspects of the national safer recruitment practice guidance and how will this be monitored and reported?
- How could safeguarding be further embedded in all areas of safer recruitment and associated HR processes?
- What advantages would there be in adopting a central HR record of all staff and volunteers and how might this be achieved?

## 4. FINDINGS – ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORTS

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### 4.1 POLICY, PROCEDURES AND GUIDANCE

- 4.1.1 All parts of the Church of England must adopt or take account of the House of Bishops' Policy Statement (2017) *Promoting a Safer Church* within their own safeguarding policy. The Policy Statement must actively underpin all safeguarding work within the Church and the drive to improve safeguarding practice.
- 4.1.2 This has been supplemented by more recent practice guidance *Key Roles and Responsibilities of Church Office Holders and Bodies* (2017) which sets out more explicitly than before the safeguarding expectations for cathedrals.
- 4.1.3 Both these documents and other national guidance provide a broad framework for cathedrals to work within, but do not provide sufficient detail to enable them to be implemented fully at a local level. Each area therefore needs to review the national guidance and supplement it with local procedures and practice guidance.

#### *Description*

- 4.1.4 The Cathedral has its own safeguarding policy and procedures, which contain statements about culture, commitments, definitions of abuse, good practice guidelines, information about responding to an allegation of abuse, safer recruitment, and training. The most recent version is dated February 2021, and it is reviewed annually at Chapter. The Cathedral has also adopted national policy and guidance.
- 4.1.5 The safeguarding page of the Cathedral's website includes links to the Cathedral's safeguarding policy and procedures, to St Albans Diocese safeguarding guidelines, and to national policies and procedures.
- 4.1.6 Policies and procedures relevant to safeguarding (such as code of conduct, computers and electronic communication, public interest disclosure (whistleblowing), grievance, harassment and bullying are all contained within the Employee Handbook (July 2020), although the safeguarding policy is not referenced. The code of conduct, computers and electronic communication policies contained within the handbook address reputational matters for the Cathedral but do not contain explicit reference to safeguarding. The Employee Handbook is supplemented by diocesan policies and procedures such as the guidelines on lone working and personal safety, which the auditors understand is being reviewed to identify any further tailoring that is required to assure relevance to Cathedral groups.
- 4.1.7 The volunteer policy and accompanying volunteer agreement covers similarly broad ground, and encompasses information about the Cathedral's approach to safeguarding, the requirement to undertake safeguarding awareness training as part of induction and how to report a safeguarding concern. The event booking form requires external organisations to be compliant with the Cathedral's safeguarding policy and guidelines.
- 4.1.8 The Cathedral regularly reviews its policies, which are generally dated and include a date for review. It has moved quickly during the pandemic to develop procedures and guidance in response to the new demands of online working and rehearsing by developing safeguarding protocols for staff and parents and 'Zoom – instructions for group leaders'. These contain references to safeguarding and cross reference to the safeguarding policy. Detailed risk assessments in key areas, such as for special events, or choir tours, supplement and cross reference with policies and procedures also.



- 4.1.9 Different departments (e.g. the Learning Centre) have developed their own procedures and guidance.
- 4.1.10 The Cathedral Safeguarding Committee (CSC) is responsible for ensuring that 'appropriate policies and processes including safer recruitment are in place and are being rigorously implemented' and 'monitoring and auditing the implementation and practice of all safeguarding procedures across the Cathedral communities'.
- 4.1.11 Auditors did not see an information-sharing protocol and do not know whether there is one in place.

### *Analysis*

- 4.1.12 The auditors found that much work has taken place to develop policy related to safeguarding, and that systematic oversight by the CSO and Chapter ensures that they are regularly reviewed. Policies are reflected in procedures and risk assessments which reflect the importance of safeguarding across the many areas of the Cathedral's work. Gaps and overlaps exist and some of the policies are over-ambitious and potentially confusing in their scope.
- 4.1.13 The Safeguarding Policy and Procedures is the main guidance document for guidance in relation to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults. It is ambitious in scope, covering a wide range of subject areas as noted in paragraph 4.1.5 above. The auditors wondered whether there might be advantages in separating out the policy and definitions from the more detailed procedures and practice guidance, which could be referenced but included as appendices. This might help improve accessibility and potentially avoid some of the duplication evident across departments, as well as enabling gaps and overlaps in procedures and practice guidance to be identified and addressed more systematically by the CSC.
- 4.1.14 There are some gaps in policies, e.g. lone working, lost children, and procedures to follow in case of external threat.
- 4.1.15 Although reviews of policy and procedures appear to happen regularly, the auditors did not see evidence of a systematic approach to assuring that staff and volunteers understand the procedures, know where to access them, and are confident to use them. Due to the limitations of the methodology, the auditors were not able to check this out as part of the audit, although a member of staff did express frustration that paperwork was not uniform across departments and that various forms were repetitious and not relevant, and the auditors did notice that good practice and procedures in one department were not necessarily adopted in another.
- 4.1.16 The absence of reference to safeguarding in the Employee Handbook is unfortunate and could possibly be remedied when the document is next reviewed. Although there is a section on the use of the internet in the handbook, in these days of significant communication via these platforms with all the risks this entails, a clearer policy on this requires development. Such a policy can then be incorporated into the relevant handbooks and guidance for all those undertaking a role in the Cathedral community.

### **Questions for the Cathedral to consider**

- How might the Cathedral assure itself that its safeguarding policies, procedures and guidance are comprehensive, up to date, accessible, understood, consistently applied and effective?
- How can the Cathedral be assured that policies, procedures and practices across departments are consistent and based on best practice?

## 4.2 CATHEDRAL SAFEGUARDING ADVISOR AND THEIR SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT

### Description

- 4.2.1 The House of Bishops' practice guidance *Key Roles and Responsibilities of Church Office Holders and Bodies* (December 2017) requires cathedrals to appoint a safeguarding professional as Cathedral Safeguarding Officer (CSO) to work with the Dean, the Chapter and cathedral staff to implement House of Bishops' policy and guidance. In St Albans, this function is delivered by the Cathedral Safeguarding Advisor (CSO), who is a volunteer. This officer works closely with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) and his small team (DST), albeit this arrangement is not yet set out in a formal agreement between the Diocese and Cathedral. In effect, the DST works with the Cathedral in its role as a parish church rather than as a separate entity entirely, supplying a range of services including training, managing difficult cases, developing risk assessments and safeguarding agreements, providing advice (including on blemished DBS checks) and handling any allegations against church officers.
- 4.2.2 The CSO is a very experienced social work professional, who, before retirement, held a range of senior posts within local authority and NHS settings. She was invited to take on the role in 2013, by the previous Sub Dean, and was not subject to any formal appointment process.
- 4.2.3 The CSO is line managed by the Sub Dean. Both the COO and the Sub Dean (who is the Cathedral safeguarding lead) see it as their responsibility to support the CSO. The CSO attends the CSC, as does the DSA, and is the Cathedral representative at the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel. The CSO's working hours should be no more than a day a week, but the auditors understand that this is variable.
- 4.2.4 The CSO works very closely with the DSA and the DST on a range of matters from individual case work and management of safeguarding agreements to policies and procedures. They meet formally every three months and at meetings of the CSC and DSAP. The DSA is an experienced former police officer with extensive experience in child and adult protection and the management of offenders, as are the two other members of DST. The DSA and team meet as a group with a social work professional for case supervision.
- 4.2.5 The Cathedral has recognised the need for a paid safeguarding professional, and a recently drafted job description for a part-time (15 hours per week) CSO has been seen by the auditors. Likewise, there is recognition in both Cathedral and Diocese that the close working needed between them should be formally set out in a service level agreement (SLA), which again exists in draft form.

### Analysis

- 4.2.6 The auditors were impressed with the quality of service given by the CSO but consider that the time for employing a safeguarding professional is long overdue. Rapid progress on developing an SLA between Cathedral and Diocese is desirable, and should take account of the need for the CSO to receive professional supervision and support and for the CSO and Cathedral not to be isolated from the wider Diocese.
- 4.2.7 The Cathedral has been extremely fortunate to have had the services of such a well-qualified and experienced CSO made freely available for so many years. Since taking up the role, the CSO has worked constructively and intensively within the Cathedral to develop a strong safeguarding culture supported by clear structures and accountabilities and a framework of policies, procedures and guidance based on

national guidance. The CSO's contact details are well publicised across the Cathedral and the auditors saw numerous examples where she gave sound advice on safeguarding and related welfare matters. Her professionalism, expertise and commitment were mentioned by many, and very much appreciated. These qualities have given the CSO the independence, standing and authority to give the kind of clear and often difficult advice regarding safeguarding which is required – including about thresholds.

- 4.2.8 There was some evidence that the current CSO being a volunteer sometimes got in the way of using her in the first instance; some staff and clergy told auditors that it was easier to go to the Cathedral's safeguarding lead (i.e. the Sub Dean), which is a very different role. Some thought will need to be given to how this 'drift to clergy' (as it was described to the auditors) might be addressed.
- 4.2.9 In the course of reviewing cases, the auditors saw many examples of the close working between CSO and DSA. They also heard many examples of the CSO delivering bespoke training, advice and guidance to different individuals and groups within the Cathedral. This highlighted the fact that other departments, notably the Music Department and the activities under the leadership of the Youth Chaplain, have not received the same level of input. This may indicate why procedures and practices are variable across the Cathedral.
- 4.2.10 The decision to recruit a paid CSO was made some two years ago. The preference of the Cathedral was for this post to be part of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST); the auditors understand that the Diocese was not in agreement with this proposal due to concerns about the team's overall capacity. The negotiations were resolved by the decision of the Cathedral to directly employ the CSO. This post is about to be advertised.
- 4.2.11 The draft job description for the CSO largely reflects the model job description for a DSA set out in national guidance (*Key Roles and Responsibilities*, 2017) and covers a wide range of responsibilities. Whilst the job description properly puts the CSO in a position of central importance in relation to safeguarding, the auditors were concerned that the CSO was being assigned responsibilities for leadership, culture and operational management which arguably sit with the Dean and Chapter and lay leadership, supported by the CSC. They would further observe that there appears to be a mismatch between the proposed salary level and the breadth of responsibilities of the post and would suggest that the proposed salary is benchmarked against the local authority salary level for a senior social work professional. Appointment of a social work professional would be a particular asset and complementary to the DST, which comprises three former police officers. Given that the CSO post is going to be based in the Cathedral, careful thought needs to be given to how it is supported and supervised, and how to avoid it becoming isolated. The SLA which is being negotiated between Cathedral and Diocese should be helpful in this regard.
- 4.2.12 The relationship between Cathedral and Diocese provides an important foundation underpinning the CSO role. The Diocese retains significant responsibilities in relation to the Cathedral and formalising arrangements would be beneficial to all concerned. At a practice level, this could include consideration of how the CSO may be incorporated as a Cathedral-based member of the wider DST. Recent and forthcoming changes in personnel within both Cathedral and Diocese may be an opportunity to make rapid progress. Building in a formal review period may further assist in this process, to ensure that the arrangements work well for all parties.

**Questions for the Cathedral to consider**

- How might the Cathedral work with the Diocese to ensure that its requirements for a safeguarding service are adequately assessed, provided and reflected in the SLA?
- How might the role of the CSO be made more visible and familiar to children, parents, staff and volunteers?
- What opportunities are there to formalise CSO input into and oversight of key departments including music and youth?

### 4.3 RECORDING SYSTEMS AND IT SOLUTIONS

- 4.3.1 Having effective, safe and useable IT systems supports good recording and makes sure that information is secure, but accessible to those people with a legitimate need to see it.
- 4.3.2 St Albans Cathedral has both electronic and paper-based systems. Electronic spreadsheets of persons trained and DBS checked are kept securely by the Safeguarding & Volunteers Assistant; access is limited and carefully controlled. The same applies to HR files, which are maintained by the Business Manager. As noted above, there is no central collection of volunteer records, other than in relation to DBS and training; heads of departments and clergy keep information relating to volunteers in their sections. There is recognition of the need to centralise the coordination of volunteers, but no specific plan on how to do this, other than assigning some responsibilities to the CSO.
- 4.3.3 Records relating to clergy are held in the diocesan office. The DSA's case work files are also kept within the diocesan office, where the DSA is based. Access to all the various files is restricted to specific, named people.
- 4.3.4 The CSO maintains electronic files for cases in which she is involved. These are described in paragraph 3.2.6 above, as are the arrangements for documenting lower-level concerns.
- 4.3.5 The Music Department keeps information on individual children. In some circumstances these include a risk assessment, which is completed by the choir chaperone. These are paper records. The auditors did not see where these are kept, but understand they are kept securely in the Music Department office and are accessible on a 'need-to-know' basis. Notes of the fortnightly safeguarding meeting are made by the chaperone and kept locked in the same departmental office.
- 4.3.6 Different groups elsewhere within the Cathedral keep records for their own use, for example, regarding visitors to the bell tower, or incidents of concern (kept in an incident book by the virgers).
- 4.3.7 The auditors were unable to check out the understanding of the requirement to seek consent for keeping personal information.
- 4.3.8 The auditors examined a sample of different electronic files, including those held by the Cathedral (staff, case work, concerns, incidents, risk assessments) and those relating to aspects of Cathedral life which were held within the Diocese. These comprised relevant case work files. Evidence of consent being sought and given by subjects were evident on some of these files, but not all.
- 4.3.9 The Cathedral's recording systems, in relation to safeguarding, are relatively simple and small in scope. The auditors were satisfied that arrangements for the secure

storage of and access to records were of a good standard. There is a need for improvements to the system of recording concerns to enable systematic oversight and monitoring.

- 4.3.10 The relatively small number of safeguarding concerns received, from an even smaller group of staff and clergy, raised a question in the auditors' minds about how well understood and used the system is for recording and reporting concerns. They were made aware of various different systems for recording incidents, concerns and complaints across the various departments and would suggest that improved coordination would enhance record keeping and help ensure that a common threshold for recording and reporting concerns is being applied. As some individuals hold many different roles across the Cathedral, this would assist in promoting a consistent approach.
- 4.3.11 The risk assessments seen were clear, relevant, and carefully considered. It was not obvious to the auditors how these risk assessments are used in practice or translate into procedures and practice guidance.
- 4.3.12 As safeguarding activity increases, and more information is expected for monitoring and quality assurance purposes, the current recording systems are likely to prove increasingly unwieldy and demanding of administrative time. As commented above, any replacement system will need to be easily completed, overseen and monitored, facilitating the ability to share important information, spot patterns of concerns and respond appropriately.

#### **Questions for the Cathedral to consider**

- How might the current system of locally held records and incident books be combined to provide better immediate oversight of low-level concerns?
- What does the Cathedral need to do to satisfy itself that all potential safeguarding concerns are identified and reported promptly?



## 5. FINDINGS – LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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### 5.1 QUALITY ASSURANCE

- 5.1.1 A safe organisation needs constant feedback loops about what is going well and where there are difficulties in relation to safeguarding, and this should drive ongoing cycles of learning and improvement. Potential sources of data are numerous, including independent scrutiny. They need to be tied into strategic plans and supporting accountability

#### *Description*

- 5.1.2 Chapter maintains oversight of safeguarding arrangements across the Cathedral and has safeguarding as a standing agenda item at every meeting. The CSO attends twice a year and presents a comprehensive annual review of safeguarding which reports on national and local developments, highlights specific cases of interest, including numbers of safeguarding agreements, proposes changes to the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures as required, and includes recommendations. This annual report is forwarded to the Bishop, with accompanying correspondence from the Dean highlighting specific details.
- 5.1.3 Chapter is assisted by the Cathedral Safeguarding Committee (CSC), which is chaired by the Sub Dean and has a responsibility for monitoring and scrutiny across the Cathedral.
- 5.1.4 The terms of reference of the independently chaired Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) reflect those in the national *Key Roles and Responsibilities* guidance by assuming responsibility for scrutinising the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements across the Diocese, including the Cathedral.
- 5.1.5 There is further information about CSC and DSAP in section 5.4 below.
- 5.1.6 There is no overarching safeguarding strategy and delivery plan in place which sets out how the Cathedral is responding to the national policy Promoting A Safer Church.
- 5.1.7 There are several examples of data which are gathered and held for monitoring purposes, for example, in relation to training, safer recruitment, DBS checks, but these are not yet used systematically to demonstrate progress or focus activity.
- 5.1.8 There is no formal mechanism in place for systematically gathering feedback from those who are engaged with the Cathedral, in whatever capacity, or receive a safeguarding service, although a draft questionnaire for choristers had been produced by the CSO and discussed at the CSC early in 2020. Due to the imminence of the audit (originally due in March 2020), this was not distributed as it was recognised that it might cause confusion given the use of a similar questionnaire as part of the audit. The very good response from across the Cathedral community to the audit questionnaire (2021) is an indication that there would be a general willingness to provide feedback if asked.

#### *Analysis*

- 5.1.9 There are elements of a quality assurance framework in place, but more can be done to provide a sound basis for systematic assurance of progress towards achieving the objective of creating a safer church.
- 5.1.10 The auditors found that elements of a framework for scrutinising and evaluating performance and impact are in place, comprising Chapter, DSAP and CSC and regular reporting to the Bishop. Chapter has made clear its 'bottom lines' regarding



training participation as a prerequisite for anyone working in the Cathedral. Databases already exist in relation to important aspects of safeguarding such as safer recruitment, training and DBS and can be interrogated for evidence of compliance.

- 5.1.11** Until now, much attention has been focused on promoting a safeguarding culture across the Cathedral, supported by an intense focus on training. Effort has been put into rectifying gaps in policies and procedures, developing risk assessments and embedding safer recruitment practice. This is all very positive. Understandably, there has also been much activity and attention devoted to responding positively to the changed circumstances arising from the pandemic and accompanying lockdowns. This has meant that many of the more recently developed policies and procedures have not been tested and evidence of understanding, compliance and impact is absent.
- 5.1.12** The development of a Promoting a Safer Church strategy and delivery plan, incorporating outcomes from this audit as appropriate, could be helpful in setting the strategic direction and underpinning a systematic approach to developing and assuring safeguarding arrangements. This could be operationally 'owned' by the CSC and provide the basis for reporting to Chapter and the DSAP.
- 5.1.13** Building a quality assurance framework with supporting systems that will give feedback on progress against the delivery plan, coupled with proportionate, written reporting at all levels, will enable Chapter to monitor how well it is fulfilling its commitment to promoting a safer church for all.

#### Questions for the Cathedral to consider

- What would be the benefits of developing a strategy for Promoting a Safer Church with an accompanying delivery plan?
- What steps are needed to develop a framework for quality assurance, in which feedback is sought from a range of children and adults, including survivors of abuse, as the basis for providing evidence to Chapter and DSAP of progress in creating a strong safeguarding culture and compliance with the expectations of Promoting a Safer Church?

## 5.2 COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE SAFEGUARDING SERVICE

- 5.2.1** A complaints process is required so that anyone who has contact with the safeguarding service knows what to do should they feel that they have a complaint to make. A strong policy is clear about who complaints should be made to, and how they can be escalated if necessary. Positive features include an independent element, and clarity that raising a safeguarding concern and making a complaint about a safeguarding service are two distinct and different things. The outcome of complaints enables an organisation to learn from those who have had to use their service, enabling them to make any necessary changes or improvements.
- 5.2.2** St Albans Cathedral does not have its own complaints policy. The Diocese of St Albans has a complaints policy, dated October 2017, which presumably applies to the Cathedral, but this is not made explicit. It is not signposted from the Cathedral website.
- 5.2.3** The diocesan policy defines what a complaint is, and includes reference, with links to aligned procedures, for use in specific circumstances (for example, if a complaint is being made by or against a member of the clergy). There is a clear distinction made

between making a complaint about the safeguarding service (by using the policy and procedures) and reporting a safeguarding concern. The procedures provide for a two-stage process, comprising informal and formal stages, and an external stage involving the Charity Commission in specific circumstances. The formal stage makes limited provision for external assistance in achieving resolution. The policy references the use of the Diocesan Grievance Procedure for complaints by staff but does not explain the distinction between making a complaint and whistleblowing.

- 5.2.4 The auditors saw two examples of complaints (both concerning the choir). Neither were related to the safeguarding service but were viewed and recorded as safeguarding concerns. Both were resolved within the Music Department, with significant involvement by the CSO. The auditors reflected that formal adoption of the diocesan complaints policy, or the development of a Cathedral-specific complaints policy, would enable distinction to be made between concerns and complaints, and in turn support organisational learning.

#### Questions for the Cathedral to consider

- What benefits might there for the Cathedral in either developing its own complaints procedure or incorporating the diocesan complaints policy alongside its own policies and procedures?

## 5.3 WHISTLEBLOWING

- 5.3.1 Effective whistleblowing procedures enable workers to raise concerns about a range of issues (sexual abuse, bullying, fraud, etc.) without the fear that their disclosures will lead to any harassment or negative impact on their personal work role/environment.
- 5.3.2 St Albans Cathedral has a public interest disclosure ('whistleblowing') policy, dated July 2020, which applies to 'all employees and all other agents of the Cathedral'. Its tone is one of encouragement to raise concerns in order that they may be dealt with properly. It sets out potential areas of concern, and the procedure to be followed (which involves reporting to a line manager or more senior person). The potential whistleblower is directed to various external organisations for assistance in circumstances where they are not satisfied that suitable remedial action has been taken. It also provides contact details for Protect, an independent organisation which provides advice and support.
- 5.3.3 The policy is included in the Employee Handbook and is referenced in the volunteer policy but is not obtainable via a search on either the Cathedral or Diocesan websites, so it was unclear to the auditors how those without access to an Employee Handbook would know about the procedure to be followed. The auditors thought the policy could be strengthened by including more explicit reference to safeguarding as an area of potential concern, whilst highlighting that concerns about the safety of an individual should be reported immediately using the appropriate procedure.
- 5.3.4 The auditors did not see or hear about examples of how the policy works in practice.

#### Questions for the Cathedral to consider

- How might the accessibility of the Cathedral whistleblowing procedure be improved?

## 5.4 CATHEDRAL SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE AND DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING ADVISORY PANEL

### *Description*

- 5.4.1 Based on the national guidance for Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panels (DSAP), set out in *Key Roles and Responsibilities*, the panel should have a key role in bringing independence and safeguarding expertise to an oversight, scrutiny and challenge role, including contributing to a strategic plan. No specifics are provided in relation to cathedrals, with the apparent assumption being that cathedrals are part of diocesan structures.
- 5.4.2 The St Albans DSAP was established around 15 years ago, although the terms of reference and constitution have been updated since then (the most recent being dated July 2018). It has had the same independent chair since 2006, who was originally appointed at the invitation of the Bishop. He is a recently retired circuit judge who has extensive experience of child and family proceedings. He is also a member of the Cathedral Chapter. The CSO attends on behalf of the Cathedral. The membership comprises both clergy and lay staff and has benefited in recent years from the inclusion of three well-qualified professional independent members.
- 5.4.3 Minutes indicate that safeguarding at St Albans Cathedral is a standing item on the DSAP agenda; this generally comprises a verbal report from the CSO. DSAP does not have any formal subgroups, but the auditors understand that individual cases are discussed by the DSA, independent chair and a small number of others. The chair presents an annual report to the Bishop's Council.
- 5.4.4 The Cathedral Safeguarding Committee (CSC) was established as a sub-committee of Chapter in May 2018 and has terms of reference which mirror that of the DSAP in that they are derived directly from the national guidance *Key Roles and Responsibilities*. The CSC is chaired by the Sub Dean, in their role as Cathedral Safeguarding Lead, and comprises a large and growing number of clergy and senior lay staff, together with the CSO, the DSA and the independent chair of DSAP. The auditors understand that there is consideration being given to the appointment of an independent chair. The CSC usually meets quarterly.

### *Analysis*

- 5.4.5 The auditors consider that both DSAP and the CSC could be developed and strengthened to support the Cathedral's strategic and operational responsibilities and strengthen scrutiny and accountability.
- 5.4.6 Both DSAP and CSC have many strengths and have developed over the years in their membership and the ways they do business. DSAP is well attended. It keeps a keen eye on national developments and their potential impact locally; it agrees and monitors a safeguarding strategy and action plan for the Diocese (which the auditors did not see) and has taken a particularly robust role in relation to safeguarding training. Minutes indicate that lively discussion features during meetings.
- 5.4.7 DSAP's role in relation to the Cathedral does not appear to amount to more than receiving a verbal report from the CSO. This means that it does not fully discharge its responsibilities through processes of scrutiny, support and constructive challenge (as set out in its terms of reference).
- 5.4.8 The auditors were impressed with the comprehensive membership of the CSC, and the quality of the minutes and supporting administration. They heard that it is greatly valued by those who attend as a forum for receiving information about safeguarding, and for engaging with operational leaders from across the Cathedral, with the

presence of the DSA considered an asset. Its regular reporting to Chapter is a strength.

- 5.4.9 The auditors question whether the CSC operates as effectively as it might in support of Chapter, however. Its terms of reference do not make it clear whether it is intended to be a strategic or an operational group, instead implying that it is potentially both, as well as a scrutiny group. There is a lack of clarity about the attendance of the DSAP independent chair, who is referred to as such in the minutes, but the terms of reference indicate his presence is as a lay Chapter member.
- 5.4.10 The Cathedral leadership has already been planning to develop CSC and actively considering the possibility of appointing an independent chair. In the view of the auditors, this may cause further confusion in that it would potentially establish that the CSC is taking on some of the scrutiny functions of Chapter.
- 5.4.11 Given the plans to adjust certain aspects of governance and leadership functions in response to the recent Cathedrals Measure, including establishing a new Executive Senior Management Team and rationalising the many subgroups reporting to Chapter, there is an opportunity to review the purpose and accountabilities of the CSC. Forthcoming changes to senior clergy and lay posts in both the Cathedral and Diocese also present an opportunity for change. In the view of the auditors, a CSC with revised terms of reference would be in a good position to be charged with leading, on behalf of the Executive SMT, the coordinated delivery of a Cathedral safeguarding strategy (see section 5.1 above) and monitoring its impact. This could then be reported to both Chapter and DSAP in their roles as leaders and scrutineers respectively.
- 5.4.12 Were such changes to be made within the Cathedral, consideration could then be given to representation at DSAP, whose terms of reference specifies a 'senior cathedral representative' – potentially the CSC chair – and to the position of the lay Chapter member/ independent DSAP chair, whose two roles contain a potential conflict of interest.

#### Questions for the Cathedral to consider

- How might the CSC be repositioned and developed to enhance its operational leadership of safeguarding and assist Chapter with its strategic responsibility for Promoting a Safer Church?
- How might the Cathedral work with the Diocese to enhance the effectiveness of the scrutiny and challenge role of DSAP in relation to the Cathedral?

## 5.5 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- 5.5.1 Safeguarding leadership takes various forms – strategic, operational and theological – with different people taking different roles. How these roles are understood, and how they fit together, will determine how well led the safeguarding function is.

### Theological leadership

- 5.5.2 The remit for theological leadership in relation to safeguarding is clearly always with the clergy and especially with the Dean of the Cathedral. This is extremely valuable in helping congregations and clergy to understand why safeguarding is a priority and intrinsic to the beliefs of the Church of England. This aspect of the leadership role is the foundation for the culture of the Church and is critical in terms of making it a safer place for children and vulnerable adults. As one member of the clergy expressed,

‘safeguarding has shifted from being scary to being part of what Christian care is about’.

- 5.5.3 The auditors saw and heard examples of how safeguarding has been explicitly and implicitly referred to by the Dean and senior clergy. The (then) national lead Dean for safeguarding, a former sub dean at St Albans, was invited to preach a sermon on safeguarding at Candlemas 2020 in advance of the original planned date for the independent audit. The previous Dean (who left in February 2021) preached a sermon in direct response to revelations in a widely viewed TV documentary about abuse by a prominent former Anglican Bishop.
- 5.5.4 The acting Dean joined St Albans in February 2018 as Sub Dean. In her previous parish role, she gained extensive experience and understanding of the impact of abuse and neglect, and as a result has sought to promote an ethos of safeguarding throughout the Cathedral, in her role as Cathedral Safeguarding Lead (CSL). In this context, the Sub Dean does not preach specifically about safeguarding, preferring to ‘weave it in’ everywhere. This is partly in recognition of the anxiety that can be felt when considering this difficult area, as well as a desire to raise awareness so that safeguarding becomes ‘part of what we do’.
- 5.5.5 Responses to the questionnaires indicate that 100 per cent of respondents consider that safeguarding is a priority in the Cathedral either extremely (85 per cent) or moderately (15 per cent); 97 per cent consider that the Dean is extremely (82 per cent) or moderately (15 per cent) active in communicating the importance of safeguarding within the Church; just 3 per cent said that safeguarding did not form part of the message of sermons. One person added an additional comment: ‘I’ve been really impressed by the way that our clergy have increased awareness of safeguarding and its importance by talking about it in conversation as well as in sermons’.

### Strategic leadership

- 5.5.6 Chapter is the Cathedral’s governing body. It directs and oversees the administration of the Cathedral’s affairs and has responsibility for leadership, policy, strategy and vision. Chapter has primary responsibility for reviewing performance against strategy, the implementation of policies and standards and delivery against plans. It is assisted by a range of sub-committees (including the CSC referred to above in section 5.4) and other bodies, some of which will change following the agreement of the Cathedrals Measure in late 2020.
- 5.5.7 Chapter consists of the Dean; the Residentiary Canons; three lay persons on the parochial electoral roll, who have the position of Cathedral Warden whilst in post and who are elected at the Annual Meeting of Parishioners; three lay persons on the parochial electoral roll, who are elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting; one lay person appointed, after consultation with the Dean, by the Bishop. The COO is Clerk to the Chapter and the Master of the Music may also attend meetings. Lay members hold office for three years but are eligible for membership for further terms of office.
- 5.5.8 The House of Bishops’ *Key Roles and Responsibilities* practice guidance assigns different and overlapping roles to Dean and Chapter, with the former having a clear leadership role in relation to safeguarding, and Chapter having a strategic and oversight role in relation to the Church of England’s Promoting a Safer Church safeguarding policy.
- 5.5.9 Different members of Chapter hold strategic and executive management responsibilities, the most prominent being the Sub Dean, who directly manages the



CSO and two minor canons, and the Canon Chancellor, who manages the Education Officer, Adult Learning Officer, and Community Engagement Officer. The Dean manages the MoM. Each of these roles has safeguarding elements. The COO also manages a number of roles which contain safeguarding-related responsibilities, e.g. for training, safer recruitment and DBS checks.

- 5.5.10 The Sub Dean is the Cathedral Safeguarding Lead and chairs the CSC. The Sub Dean is aware of the need to be surrounded by confident and questioning individuals to help maintain awareness and progress, and counter what was described as a 'tendency to think the best about people' which historically has not met the needs of survivors of abuse.
- 5.5.11 The self-assessment completed in preparation for the audit demonstrates a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development needed. The auditors saw many examples of gaps being identified and improvements made promptly.
- 5.5.12 There is no service level agreement (SLA) in place between the Diocese and the Cathedral which sets out relative roles and responsibilities, although one now exists in draft form after a very long period of discussion.

### **Operational leadership and management**

- 5.5.13 The Sub Dean is active in promoting and providing leadership to safeguarding and is well supported by the CSO and numerous managers. The auditors were impressed by the many ways in which safeguarding has been strengthened over recent years, and how it is being integrated into much of the Cathedral's day-to-day business.
- 5.5.14 Some departments are particularly well developed in their approach to safeguarding, and there is much good practice to share across other areas of activity. The CSC has been widely welcomed as helping to coordinate areas of otherwise disparate activity, and auditors also heard of other structures, such as the monthly liaison group, that are also useful in promoting good communication across departments and ensuring a safe, coordinated approach.
- 5.5.15 The role of the CSO in receiving concerns is extensively promoted and a dedicated mailbox makes reporting straightforward. The auditors heard that the Sub Dean is also used as a first point of contact for many to raise safeguarding concerns and noted evidence in case files that the Sub Dean is systematic in seeking advice from the CSO before responding in individual cases.
- 5.5.16 The management of the many hundreds of people who volunteer for the Cathedral sits with different individuals (group leaders), some of whom are themselves volunteers. The Volunteer Committee is chaired by the Sub Dean and maintains a degree of oversight, and group leaders relate to different individuals within the overall structure, both clergy and lay. There is recognition by senior managers of the need to coordinate volunteers centrally, and the auditors would support this.

### **Analysis**

- 5.5.17 There has been significant progress in raising the profile of safeguarding and promoting safer working practices across the Cathedral. Clarifying responsibilities and developing a clear strategic plan will provide a firm basis for the next phase in the development of safeguarding in St Albans.
- 5.5.18 The auditors found that the former and present Dean and Chapter have worked purposefully together with the CSO and COO to raise the profile of safeguarding across the Cathedral, and to foster a sense of collective ownership and responsibility. They are thoughtful about the challenges they face and committed to promoting a safeguarding culture. They are very respectful of the professional support and advice



of the CSO, invariably accepting their advice. Their recognition of the need to appoint a paid professional as CSO is timely.

- 5.5.19** The inclusion of safeguarding as a standing agenda item at Chapter is a positive indication of the priority it is given. The designation of a particularly experienced member of Chapter as safeguarding lead is widely appreciated. The auditors heard that the very approachability of the Sub Dean, together with continuing anxieties by members of the Cathedral community about what might happen once the CSO is involved, means that there is a risk that the CSO is not approached as promptly and systematically as is desirable. The auditors accept that this is a particular issue given the volunteer status of the present CSO, and hence her relative lack of visibility, but think that it should nevertheless be addressed. Action could include designating a senior member of lay staff as Cathedral Safeguarding Lead, refocusing the current role held by the Sub Dean as a more strategic Chapter Safeguarding Lead, and making greater use of relevant case examples in training and communication to educate people about the positive role of the CSO.
- 5.5.20** As already noted, there is overlap between the strategic, executive and operational responsibilities of a number of individuals, particularly senior clergy. Whilst partly inevitable due to the relatively slim structure, the auditors consider that a clearer separation between operational and strategic responsibilities is possible and desirable. The imminent creation of an Executive Senior Management Team is to be welcomed, and this will be a significant help in clarifying roles and responsibilities.
- 5.5.21** The auditors consider that the underdeveloped quality assurance framework and lack of a strategic safeguarding plan could mean there is a risk of Chapter not fully meeting its responsibilities for strategic leadership of safeguarding, as set out in Promoting a Safer Church. A confusion of strategic and operational roles means that it is not always possible for Chapter to exercise its strategic functions and hold to account those with responsibilities for operational delivery.
- 5.5.22** It is disappointing that differences of opinion between the Diocese and Cathedral over an SLA, which should set out details of the interface between the two bodies in order to create an overall safer system, have not yet been resolved. This is becoming more urgent as the Cathedral seeks to appoint a professional CSO.

#### **Questions for the Cathedral to consider**

- What more might the Dean and clergy do to share positive public messages around the importance of safeguarding and its integral place in church life?
- How might the structures and systems within the Cathedral be developed to ensure that the relative responsibilities for strategic and operational safeguarding leadership are clear and that there is proper accountability for activities and progress in delivering the Promoting A Safer Church policy?
- How might the Cathedral work with the Diocese to agree relative roles and responsibilities, including the interface between the CSO and the DST, within a reasonable time frame?

#### **Culture**

- 5.5.23** The most critical aspect of safeguarding relates to the culture and the extent to which priority is placed on safeguarding individuals as opposed to protecting the reputation of the Church. Also integral is the ability of all members of the Church to 'think the unthinkable' about their friends and colleagues. SCIE's experience of auditing

safeguarding in faith contexts more broadly, suggests that in areas where there is direct experience amongst senior clergy of previous serious abuse cases, a culture of openness and humility in approaching safeguarding issues can be stronger, alongside a move away from responses which give too much attention to reputational issues and the welfare of (alleged) perpetrators, as opposed to the welfare of victims and survivors. An open learning culture starts from the assumption that maintaining adequate vigilance is difficult and proactively seeks feedback on how safeguarding is operating and encourages people to highlight any concerns about how things are working so they can be addressed.

### *Description*

- 5.5.24** The Cathedral's vision 2019–2024 includes a commitment to being 'a place where everyone feels that they can belong'. Accompanying strategic priorities include 'delivering any recommendations flowing from the planned independent Cathedral Safeguarding Audit and the House of Bishops' safeguarding initiatives'. This sets a positive context for further developing a culture of safeguarding.
- 5.5.25** The Sub Dean is particularly conscious of the importance of creating a positive ethos around safeguarding, promoting it as the right thing to do rather than something to be worried of. The auditors saw and heard about many examples of how this message is widely communicated and integrated into the day-to-day business of the Cathedral. Training has helped to reinforce this message, which is also reflected in the Cathedral's self-assessment.
- 5.5.26** The way in which the CSO has been proactive in engaging with different groups of staff and volunteers has also had notable success in overcoming initial resistance and promoting high standards of safe practice.
- 5.5.27** The auditors were particularly impressed by the way that the CSO has supported the Cathedral in keeping abreast of and learning from national developments, including those with difficult messages such as the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA).
- 5.5.28** The response to the audit has been indicative of the openness and lack of complacency with which the leadership have sought to lead and develop their safeguarding arrangements.

### *Analysis*

- 5.5.29** The attention given to building a safeguarding culture was evident. The auditors wondered what further steps could be taken to embed safeguarding across the Cathedral as 'everybody's business'.
- 5.5.30** The focus on building a safeguarding culture has been very positive. Collective ownership is visible in particular parts of the Cathedral, and feedback via questionnaires indicates that there has been significant success in promoting safeguarding awareness. Although not particularly explicit within the Cathedral vision, the auditors judged that safeguarding is a commonly understood priority but could be communicated more effectively to the wider Cathedral community. Less evident is how the Cathedral learns from the experiences of survivors and others who have received a safeguarding response.
- 5.5.31** There remain parts of the Cathedral where safeguarding is viewed with some caution and sometimes anxiety and appears to stem from a misunderstanding that labelling a concern as 'safeguarding' will have negative consequences for the child or adult about whom there is a concern.

5.5.32 The auditors reflected that an area and community which is as relatively advantaged as St Albans can lead to a sense that safeguarding concerns 'don't happen here' and inhibits the ability of individuals to 'think the unthinkable'. This will be addressed as training and related activities are continued.

**Questions for the cathedral to consider**

- What additional steps could be taken to promote and embed an open, learning culture across the Cathedral in which safeguarding is owned as 'everybody's business' and test out how effectively this is being achieved?

**Links with the National Safeguarding Team**

5.5.33 Links with the NST are generally made directly via the DSA. The CSO also attends quarterly CSOs national meetings which include members of NST and is assiduous in keeping the CSC and Chapter informed of national thinking and developments.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

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St Albans Cathedral has thought carefully about its own strengths and weaknesses and has a good awareness of where it would like to make improvements.

- 1 Many of the arrangements in place for ensuring the safety of the Cathedral are well understood and effective. There is further work to be done to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of all staff and volunteers, as well as visitors, is underpinned by agreed procedures. Some practical measures could be taken to improve safety.
- 2 There is a high level of awareness across clergy and staff of the needs of vulnerable adults who visit the Cathedral, and a concern to respond positively whilst being cognisant of the need to balance concerns for an individual with the safety and wellbeing of other visitors. There is similar recognition of the potential for volunteers to become vulnerable. The plan to deliver mental health training to staff and volunteers will assist in providing a more confident and consistent response, but there remains a need to consider how to develop a more consistent oversight of and response to the most vulnerable individuals as well as a response to staff and volunteers who have to deal with challenging individuals and incidents.
- 3 The arrangements to support school visits and family learning are well established and safe. Safeguarding and administrative arrangements for the separate children and youth activities are less well developed and would benefit from alignment with those in the learning centre together with the introduction of systematic engagement with the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer (CSO).
- 4 Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the Cathedral choirs are well developed but need attention to ensure that high standards are consistently applied in all settings. The highly differentiated responsibilities between departmental staff inhibits the ability of the Master of the Music (MoM) to maintain oversight of safeguarding and welfare across all music activities. More can be done to align practice across the choirs, improve communication between departmental staff, clarify the respective responsibilities of parents, volunteers and staff, and raise the profile of safeguarding.
- 5 Safeguarding procedures and practices in the bell tower are strong and comprehensive. The hard work and commitment of the officers in the tower, working together with the CSO, is evident. The engagement of the Ringing Master at key meetings helps to offset the potential for isolation that is inevitable in an environment that is physically removed from the main areas of the Cathedral.
- 6 Case work is good overall. Safeguarding agreements are thorough and well managed. Lower-level concerns are recorded and managed less systematically; work is needed to ensure that information is recorded clearly, in a way that supports regular oversight, and shared in a way that is timely and consistently compliant with GDPR requirements.
- 7 The Cathedral has been very successful in ensuring that all its staff and volunteers have undertaken basic safeguarding awareness training, and that specific groups have received more specialist training relevant to their roles, some of which has been provided directly by the CSO. There would be benefits in adopting a more planned

approach to training delivery and evaluation of impact, and in regular reporting of progress.

- 8 Safer recruitment practice is working well in many areas, but there remain significant gaps and inconsistencies in practice. The absence of a single central record restricts the ability of the Cathedral easily to monitor the standards of safer recruitment practice, and the absence of a centralised HR record-keeping system is a vulnerability. A safer-recruitment approach should be applied for all staff and volunteer appointments.
- 9 Much work has taken place to develop policy related to safeguarding, and systematic oversight by the CSO and Chapter ensures that they are regularly reviewed. Policies are reflected in procedures and risk assessments which reflect the importance of safeguarding across the many areas of the Cathedral's work. Gaps and overlaps exist and some of the policies are over-ambitious and potentially confusing in their scope.
- 10 The quality of service given by the CSO is impressive, but the time for employing a safeguarding professional is long overdue. Rapid progress on developing a service level agreement (SLA) between Cathedral and Diocese is desirable, and should take account of the need for the CSO to receive professional supervision and support and for the CSO and Cathedral not to be isolated from the wider Diocese.
- 11 There are elements of a quality assurance framework in place, but more can be done to provide a sound basis for systematic assurance of progress towards achieving the objective of creating a safer Church.
- 12 Both Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) and the Cathedral Safeguarding Committee (CSC) could be developed and strengthened to support the Cathedral's strategic and operational responsibilities and strengthen scrutiny and accountability.
- 13 There has been significant progress in raising the profile of safeguarding and promoting safer working practices across the Cathedral. Clarifying responsibilities and developing a clear strategic plan will provide a firm basis for the next phase in the development of safeguarding in St Albans.
- 14 The attention given to building a safeguarding culture was evident. The auditors wondered what further steps could be taken to embed safeguarding across the Cathedral as 'everybody's business'.

## APPENDIX: REVIEW PROCESS

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### DATA COLLECTION

#### **Information provided to auditors**

- Cathedral context – 2021
- Safeguarding self-audit summary – 2021
- St Albans Cathedral Our Vision 2019–2024 – 2021
- Cathedral organisation – 2021
- Building plan
- Cathedral Strategic Risk Footprint – Chapter Review Outcome – October 2020
- Cathedral Strategic Risk Response Plan – Chapter Review Outcome – October 2020
- Cathedral Audit Committee Risk Management & Internal Control Summary – November 2020
- Cathedral Annual Review – 2019
- Cathedral Annual Report and Accounts – November 2019

#### **Leadership, accountability, governance**

- Chapter Minutes – December 2020
- Chapter Minutes – January 2021
- Chapter Minutes – February 2021
- Annual Review of Safeguarding – 2019–2020
- Safeguarding Annual Report to Chapter – 2020–2021
- Cathedral Safeguarding Report to the Bishop – 25/2/20
- Cathedral Safeguarding Report to the Bishop
- Sermons – 19 January 2020
- Candlemas – 2020

#### **Cathedral Safeguarding Committee**

- Safeguarding Committee – Minutes – 4 February 2020
- Safeguarding Committee – Minutes – 23 November 2020
- Safeguarding Committee – Minutes – 9 February 2021
- Safeguarding Committee – Minutes – 9 March 2021
- Safeguarding committee – terms of reference



### **Cathedral safeguarding officer and team and their supervision & management**

- Cathedral Safeguarding Officer – role description – December 2014
- Cathedral Safeguarding Officer Job Pack – First Draft 100421

### **Policies, procedures and guidance**

- Cathedral safeguarding policy and procedures – February 2021
- Guidelines on Lone Working and Personal Safety (Diocese) – Undated
- Zoom – instructions for group leaders – Current
- Event booking form – 2020
- Volunteer policy – February 2020
- Volunteer Agreement – February 2020
- Public Interest Disclosure ('Whistleblowing') – July 2020
- Grievance Procedure – July 2020
- MentorAdvice – Undated
- Harassment and Bullying policy – July 2020
- Equal Opportunities and Diversity policy and procedures – July 2020

### **Diocese**

- Terms of Reference and Constitution for Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel – July 2018
- DSAP minutes – February 2020
- DSAP minutes – July 2020
- DSAP minutes – October 2020
- Letter to Bishop Alan - Safeguarding Agreement with the Diocese – 8 January 2020
- Bishop Alan Email – 9 February 2020
- David Warlock Email – 10 February 2020
- HS SLA Meeting Notes – 16 March 2020
- SLA CSO Meeting Follow Through Email – 26 November 2020
- SLA – draft – 26 November 2020

### **Choirs and music department**

- Abbey Singers Chorister Risk Assessment – November 2019
- AGC Sweden 2018 Tour Risk Assessment – February 2018
- Girls' Choir Denmark Tour - parental letter and consent form – 2020
- Parish Singers Chorister Risk Assessment – November 2019

- St Albans Choirs Online Performance Risk Assessment – December 2020
- SAC Boys Choir 'Be A Chorister for the Day' Risk Assessment – October 2019
- Range of Risk Assessments related to boys' and girls' choir, individual chorister, carol singing and packing of customers' bags at a local store – November 2019–January 2020
- Documents relating to lay clerks, including job description – 2019/20
- St Albans Cathedral Choirs and Music department Safeguarding policy (Adults) – January 2020
- Choristers' virtual singing lessons – Safeguarding protocols for staff and parents – First issued 19/11/20, revised 9/2/21
- Choir handbook – 2019–20

### **Staffing & volunteers**

- Employee Handbook – July 2020
- DBS lists – 23/3/21 & 11/4/21
- List of safer recruitment files – Current
- Safeguarding training records for clergy, staff and volunteers – April 2021
- St. Albans Cathedral Society of Change Ringers-Rules – January 2020
- Bellringing H&S Risk Assessment – 1.2.21
- Bellringing Safeguarding Guidelines – 03.21
- SAC Pastoral Visit Risk Assessment – Undated.

### **Communications**

- Weekly Notices – 4 examples 2019-2021
- Volunteers Newsletter – 3 examples, 2020-2021
- Abbey News – 2 examples, 4/2018, spring 2019
- Safeguarding Newsletter – March 21

### **Safeguarding practice**

- List of Safeguarding Concerns – Current
- Schools Team Introduction and training pack – September 2019
- Risk Assessment – School Visits – March 2021
- School Visits Working with Groups Additional Safety & Safeguarding Guidance
- Abbey Tots risk assessment – September 2019
- Numerous documents relating to youth activities, including Excite Membership & Medical Consent Form, attendance registers – 2019–2020

*Participation of members of the Cathedral*

Conversations were held with the following people:

Acting Dean, Canon Chancellor, Chief Operating Officer, Cathedral Safeguarding Officer, Master of Music, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, Chair of Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel, Safeguarding & Volunteers Assistant, Minor Canon (Youth Chaplain), Business Manager, Visitor Services Officer, Choir Chaperone, Education officer, Head Virger, Ringing Master, Deputy Ringing Master, member of Volunteers' Committee.

*The audit: what records / files were examined?*

The auditors reviewed: • 12 case records • four volunteer HR files and three staff HR files for evidence of safer recruitment.

**Limitations of audit**

No survivors responded to the invitation to speak directly with the auditors.

All interviews except one were conducted online, due to the continuing restrictions arising from the COVID Pandemic.