



social care  
institute for excellence

# Wells Cathedral

## Independent Safeguarding Audit

May 2022



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.

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- identifying and sharing knowledge about what works and what's new
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- 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 delighted to have been asked to provide an independent audit of the safeguarding arrangements of the cathedrals of the Church of England.
- 1.1.2** This programme of work has seen three cathedral audits in 2018, 16 in 2019, four in 2020, 17 in 2021 and a final three early in 2022. 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 in supporting progress in effective and timely safeguarding practice. We look forward to working with you to this end.

### 1.2 THE AUDIT PROCESS

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

- 1.2.1** 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 is 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 uses 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**

- 1.2.2** 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

- 1.2.3** 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.
- 1.2.4** 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

- 1.2.5** The process will involve reviewing documentation as well as talking to key people, including focus groups. Further details are provided in the appendix.

The site visit will be either three days or two and a half days. Cathedrals have been selected for the three-day audit to provide a broad base or in relation to the scale of a given operation, and/or where concerns may have been raised in the past for the cathedral.

## 1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

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 setting out the audit process and any limitations to this audit.

## 2. CONTEXT

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### 2.1 CONTEXT OF THE CATHEDRAL

**2.1.1** As part of the audit process, the leadership in each cathedral is asked to supply a brief description of the institution. Wells Cathedral stated:

Set in the medieval heart of England's smallest city, Wells is the earliest English Cathedral built in the Gothic style. Known as England's most poetic Cathedral, Wells has gained an enviable reputation for its lovingly maintained Gothic architecture, its world class music, and its Ministry of Welcome to some 290,000 visitors each year, as well as the 150,000 people drawn from local, national and international audiences who attend services, concerts and other events.

The Cathedral may appear unchanging and timeless, yet it is so much more: a thriving heritage attraction; a venue for concerts, exhibitions and new music; a community space; a centre for learning; a place for discussion and debate; a building where the city and county gather to commemorate and celebrate key occasions and milestones; and where so many are encouraged to be still for a moment and immerse themselves in an oasis of calm, peace and tranquillity in an otherwise frantic world.

**2.1.2** The Cathedral's five core values are: spirituality, evolving tradition, creative excellence, collaboration and learning, all set within the context of the Christian belief and ethos. Currently, the values are under review and much work has been completed, with key operational leaders joining Chapter as required. The Dean described striving for 'happy excellence' with faith at the heart of everything the cathedral does.

**2.1.3** The cathedral sits in the centre of the city of Wells, in close proximity to Wells Cathedral School. There are regular Sunday and weekday services, the most popular of which is the 10.30am Sunday Eucharist. The cathedral employs 75 staff and around 400 volunteers.

**2.1.4** Wells has a population of around 12,000. It is the country's smallest city, sitting between Bath and Bristol in a semi-rural area, with pockets of deprivation. Wells is relatively less diverse than many other cities in the UK in terms of ethnicity and faith denomination: 97.5% of those living in Wells are ethnically White (with the more specific White British category recorded at 93.5%) and 66.5% described themselves as Christian. Wells has an ageing population and is a popular place in which to retire. In 2011, the mean average age of those living in Wells was 41.9 years (the median age being 43). The city of Wells is operated within three levels of local government: Somerset County Council, Mendip District Council and Wells City Council. In common with many other cities, Wells sees a number of social issues such as homelessness and rough sleeping in the local area and immediate vicinity of the Cathedral.

**2.1.5** Wells is a medieval city and in addition to the Cathedral, there are many attractions, including the famous caves at Wookey Hole, Cheddar Gorge, Glastonbury Abbey and Tor and Stourhead. Wells therefore attracts many tourists, particularly in the summer months. The Cathedral does not charge for entry but does suggest a donation. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the

Cathedral set up a 'bounce-back' appeal and managed their finances well. While resources are constrained, they have not suffered the financial difficulties seen in many other cathedrals.

## 2.2 CONTEXTUAL FEATURES RELEVANT TO SAFEGUARDING

- 2.2.1** Wells Cathedral is dedicated to St Andrew and Apostle and is the seat of the Bishop of Bath and Wells. Building began in 1175 in the Gothic style. The Cathedral's broad west front and central tower dominate the building and contain 300 sculpted figures. To the right of the west front is a newer building housing the welcome desk, shop and Cathedral café. The Cathedral is a Grade I listed building.
- 2.2.2** There are several entrances to the Cathedral's nave, but visitors are channelled through past the welcome desk. The Cathedral has extensive cloisters, an undercroft currently used for storage, and several side chapels. In common with many cathedrals, pillars restrict the view across the Cathedral floor. There are also several side chapels, some of which are completely open, but others provide low walls and areas which could be closed off. Several areas of the Cathedral have been developed over time to improve services, including a new song school and education centre.
- 2.2.3** Bell ringing takes place within the SW tower which is accessible only from inside the Cathedral building.
- 2.2.4** The Cathedral sits within a large, grassed space with direct access through to the city's market place on one side and Cathedral offices and Vicars' Close on the other. Wells Cathedral School is a short walk away, via Vicars' Close.
- 2.2.5** Vicars' Close is claimed to be the oldest purely residential street with original buildings surviving intact in Europe. It consists of two rows of medieval houses facing each other across a cobbled street. The houses are picturesque and photogenic but were reported to be cold and damp inside, affording very little privacy.
- 2.2.6** The Cathedral's Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Operational Safeguarding Lead provided a statement to the Independent Investigation into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) in March 2019 as part of the Inquiry's investigation into residential schools and, in particular, in relation to safeguarding practices at Wells Cathedral School.

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

### Cathedral and Diocesan Safeguarding Arrangements

- 2.3.1** The Dean and Chapter of Wells Cathedral has overall responsibility for safeguarding. Since 2014, the Cathedral has had its own Cathedral Safeguarding Officer (CSO), a role that was added onto the existing Outreach and Education remit. Between 2016 and 2020, two hours per month oversight was provided by the Diocesan Safeguarding Manager (DSM). Since January 2020, the Cathedral has paid to have 2/5 of the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) hours seconded to the Cathedral. In practice, the commitment of 14.5 hours per week seconded hours are fulfilled by whichever member of Diocesan safeguarding staff is most appropriate for the situation. This arrangement seeks to ensure that a comprehensive service is available which is flexible enough to



meet the Cathedral's needs.

- 2.3.2** The Chapter Lead for safeguarding is the Canon Precentor, with the COO who is also the Chapter Clerk, Administrator, HR lead and Cathedral's operational lead for safeguarding. Since 2017, the COO has attended the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) to represent the Cathedral. Since 2018, safeguarding at the Cathedral has been a standing agenda item for the DSAP.
- 2.3.3** Currently, there is no Cathedral Safeguarding Group (CSG) but there are plans to put this in place. Information is therefore provided to Chapter by the COO and Chapter Lead for Safeguarding. Auditors saw evidence of a written report formal reporting from the DSA to Chapter. Cathedral Safer Recruitment including DBS checks is carried out by the PA to the COO with any blemished checks risk assessed by the DSA. Information on training and DBS checks is shared between the Cathedral and diocese to avoid duplication. An information sharing agreement is in place to regulate this exchange of data.
- 2.3.4** The Dean of Wells, as the lead figure in all aspects of Cathedral life, carries the ultimate responsibility for safeguarding. Supporting him in this are a number of clergy and staff, including:
- the Canon Pastor with responsibility for pastoral care (including volunteer chaplains) and the welcomers for the Sunday Eucharist
  - the Canon Precentor with responsibility for worship, music and mission, including the choirs and servers
  - the Canon Chancellor with responsibility for library, education and outreach and the bell tower
  - the COO, who is also the lead for operational safeguarding across the Cathedral, the Chapter Clerk and Cathedral HR lead with responsibility for things common to life and the work of the Cathedral including resourcing levels, central offices, finance services, development office, commercial operations and the fabric and works department
  - the Director of Music who reports to the Canon Precentor and has line management of the choirs
  - the Head Virger who ensures the safety and security of the Cathedral buildings, reporting to the Canon Precentor
  - the Education Officer who looks after school visits and educational activities reporting to the Canon Chancellor
  - the Volunteer Coordinator who looks after all volunteers and their recruitment, reporting to the COO
  - the Diocesan Safeguarding Manager (DSM) and the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA) who, through liaison with the COO, support the Cathedral's safeguarding case work through a Service Level Agreement

(SLA).

- 2.3.5** The Cathedral is supported by Chapter as the governing body, which is comprised of three lay members, four residentiary Canons including the Archdeacon of Wells and the Dean. The COO is a member of Chapter by Constitution and Statutes but this is believed to be a conflict and therefore the COO has waived this right via a clause in her current contract of employment. Other senior managers also attend when items pertinent to their responsibilities are being discussed and to contribute to the new Cathedral strategy.
- 2.3.6** The Chapter is advised by its Finance Committee, Cathedral Council and College of Canons. There is also an Investments Sub-Committee, a Fabric Advisory Committee and an Enterprise Board.

## 2.4 WHO WAS SEEN IN THE AUDIT

- 2.4.1** The audit involved reviewing documentation and case files and talking to people at the heart of safeguarding in the Cathedral, such as the Dean, Chapter members, safeguarding staff, music leads, the tower captain, education staff and those managing the floor of the Cathedral. The fieldwork aspect of the audit was conducted over two and a half days.
- 2.4.2** Further details are provided in the appendix.

## 2.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE AUDIT

- 2.5.1** While a site visit was made, due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and the prevalence of the Omicron strain of the virus during the time of this audit, certain aspects were necessarily different.
- 2.5.2** No adult/child focus groups were held during this audit and instead surveys were made available for both adults (staff, congregants, volunteers and parents of children involved in the Cathedral) and children (including choristers, bell ringers and servers). These were analysed by the audit team and findings explored and referenced throughout conversations. This, nevertheless, limited the depth of knowledge that could be gained from participants, and this was further limited by the inability to hold follow-up discussions with respondents.
- 2.5.3** It was not possible to watch evensong because at the time of the site visit, choristers were rehearsing for a recording. Auditors did watch the rehearsals, however, and walked the route of the choristers to support an understanding of arrangements made for them.

## 3. FINDINGS – PRACTICE

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### 3.1 SAFE ACTIVITIES AND WORKING PRACTICES

#### Precincts and buildings

**3.1.1** There are significant challenges to running a place of worship that welcomes large numbers of worshippers each week, receives several thousand visitors a year and is open to the public, some of whom may be vulnerable themselves, or a possible risk to others. A prominent public building like a cathedral is also vulnerable to external threats. The commitment of the Dean and Chapter to make the cathedral a public space as well as a place of worship means that a consistent balance must always be maintained between being open and welcoming and ensuring safety and security.

#### *Description*

- 3.1.2** The management of the Cathedral is principally the work of the virger team, which comprises the Head Virger (with line-management from the Canon Precentor), two senior virgers and an additional virger team member. The team undertakes all key tasks relating to arrangements for services and activities. The Cathedral does not buy in external support for events, and so arrangements are made and led by the internal events team and carried out by the virgers. The team wears Cathedral uniforms that identify them to others, and work closely with the works team who look after the maintenance of all buildings.
- 3.1.3** The Head Virger has been part of the virger team for 24 years and head virger for 15 of these years. He described having seen much change related to staffing and safeguarding. Currently, relationships between the virger team and the senior staff are strained and there has been a review of the team recently undertaken. An additional virger member will join the team from the summer.
- 3.1.4** The virger on duty arrives at the Cathedral at 6.45am and the Cathedral is open from 7am. The virger is alone until cleaners arrive at about 7.15am. The Head Virger expressed no concerns about lone working, each virger has a radio and are very rarely alone in the evenings when only the central Cathedral is open. Each of the virgers has completed the Church of England's Basic and Foundation safeguarding courses with the Head Virger also having completed Safer Recruitment training. The virger team has also undertaken first-aid training which is to be refreshed imminently. Virgers are the first port-of-call for many in the Cathedral, in the case of an emergency.
- 3.1.5** Public access to the Cathedral is through the new entry cloister (NEC) adjacent to the historic west front. This has remained the case throughout the pandemic. There are other points of access but these remain either locked with a key or a keypad for controlled access.
- 3.1.6** As is true of many Cathedrals, Wells has several side chapels that, by their nature, are more hidden areas of the building. Despite this, there is good visibility into the majority of these areas through low windows and open

doorways. St Katherine's Chapel has good visibility and is used when possible as a safe place to talk to those in need. The Cathedral does not have a crypt but does have an undercroft which is currently used for storage and not accessible to the public. There is a High Parts Tour around the Cathedral which forms part of organised Cathedral tours. Volunteers position themselves at key points around the Cathedral floor to help improve accessibility for visitors and visibility, and this includes at the bottom of the stairs to the high walk and library.

- 3.1.7** There are several routes for volunteers and staff to seek help or support when in the Cathedral building, which includes a telephone at the main welcome desk, and radios carried by the virgers. The Head Virger has built positive links with the other organisations in Wells offering support, such as the Connect Centre for the homeless and Phoenix House, which supports those with mental health difficulties. Links with local police teams are less well established and the virgers are no longer part of the Wells City 'Shopaware' scheme.
- 3.1.8** All non-public areas of the Cathedral are secured with key or code locks. There is no CCTV in operation but the Cathedral is alarmed and for out-of-hours alarms (including fire and intruder), the virger team are notified. All virgers live on site and the Head Virger is first on the call list for the alarm. The intruder system is not linked to the police, and so a call is made only once it is determined by the call centre that it is not a false alarm.
- 3.1.9** Virgers do encounter some homeless people sleeping rough around the Cathedral. The virgers know the majority of them and are able to talk to them, signpost and provide a hot drink from the cathedral café. The cathedral's 'Penniless Porch' is historically a place where people were permitted to beg and people still make use of this for shelter and busking.
- 3.1.10** Auditors did not see a missing child/adult procedure in place within the Cathedral. Terrorism has not yet been formally planned for, beyond 'run, hide, tell' and although the Head Virger is in contact with the Cathedrals' Security Group from Westminster Abbey, invacuation has not been rehearsed. The Cathedral will be part of an exercise run by Avon and Somerset police in the near future.
- 3.1.11** The Cathedral holds a weekly diary meeting for all departments, including clergy, to attend and coordinate upcoming events and activities.

### *Analysis*

- 3.1.12** The auditors judged that the virger team were well recognised and effective in their arrangements for the general safety of the site and visitors. However, there is some further work to be done to ensure that this continues to be underpinned by agreed procedures to ensure that the Cathedral is both a place of welcome and safety.
- 3.1.13** Auditors judged that Wells Cathedral has not been as pro-active as many other cathedrals regarding anti-terrorism. The west front is vulnerable and open to a large vehicle or motorbike being driven close to the main door. Bollards are not always in place leaving an additional vulnerability. Choristers have not

practiced lockdown procedures and there is no plan in place for such an eventuality; for example, stored water, medi-packs or information for staff. Policies for unattended bags/parcels, missing children or missing adults were not evident although thought to be in place.

- 3.1.14** The virger team work well with the pastoral team who find them invaluable in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of visitors who might be in distress. Virgers also interact well with those on the fringes of society who come to the Cathedral for support.
- 3.1.15** However, virgers described relationships with the Dean as difficult because of standards which appear unattainable. They described it as not unusual for a Dean to be exacting but that there have been angry words about small things such as candles going out or light bulbs not working. The Dean, COO and an activity leader described frustration with the virger team due to rooms for activities often not being set up, despite being part of the weekly plan.
- 3.1.16** While the virgers were not overly concerned regarding lone working, the auditors found concerns around lone working reflected in the responses of the survey of staff, volunteers and congregants of the Cathedral. Thirty-eight respondents (31%) felt that lone working was only moderately avoidable in their current roles, and 12 respondents (10%) felt that it was not at all avoidable.
- 3.1.17** There is an unusually polarised view of the effectiveness of the virger team and the management of the precincts and buildings, with some having the view that things are managed well and others feeling that things are not. The auditors judged competence demonstrated by those in key roles around the Cathedral floor is based more on in-depth experience and less on agreed, formalised and commonly understood procedures. Coupled with some senior leaders' exacting standards and demonstrated frustration, the wellbeing and morale of the team is perhaps lower than it should be and this in turn effects performance, becoming a vicious circle. Developing clear guidance with more restorative management would assist in redressing the balance.

#### Questions for the Cathedral to consider

- What are the barriers to seeking advice and putting in place anti-terrorism measures which protect the Cathedral and those within it, are well established and well-rehearsed?
- How can the Cathedral be assured that relationships between the virger team, the Dean and other senior leaders reach a mutually acceptable level?
- Who is best placed to support the development of safety procedures to standardise Cathedral practices in relation to missing children and adults, and lone working?

## Children

This section is about children who come to the Cathedral in various capacities. It does not

cover choristers, or children who bell ring, who are referred to in section 3.2.

### *Description*

- 3.1.18** Wells Cathedral benefits from an active education department which engages with children and school groups from the local area and beyond, and brings them into the Cathedral for learning opportunities and events. The department is led by an Education Officer working 20 hours per week during the term time, who has designed a programme of school visits to the Cathedral.
- 3.1.19** School visits are managed safely and agreed procedures are in place to support a consistent approach that includes initial contact and booking, sharing of risk assessments, allocation of volunteers and supervision on the day of the visit. It is made clear that teachers and school staff retain responsibility for their pupils.
- 3.1.20** The Education Department is supported by a team of safely recruited Education Assistants to help with craft activities and who receive additional induction in order to work in the Education Department. Volunteer guides also assist the Education Department, taking tours of ten children and school staff at a time around the Cathedral as part of the school visit. All have completed basic and foundation level safeguarding training and are not permitted to begin in post until this is completed.
- 3.1.21** The Cathedral has a relatively new bespoke learning facility which caters well for school visits, including special schools. Events held in the Cathedral, such as the Museum of the Moon and the loan of the Antony Gormley sculpture currently on the west front of the cathedral, have been well publicised to schools and attracted many visits.
- 3.1.22** Educational outreach is not yet in place at the Cathedral, although there are plans to incorporate this into the offer for schools from October 2023. Auditors heard of plans for digital development, including 3D mapping of the Cathedral so that pupils unable to visit can view the building clearly.
- 3.1.23** The Cathedral also offers a Sunday School called Wellsprings, run by safely recruited leaders who have completed safeguarding training. Sometimes leaders are accompanied by clergy, usually the Canon Chancellor. Wellsprings meets in the Education Room, leaving the main service during the Gloria and returning around the end of the Eucharistic Prayer.
- 3.1.24** Parents or guardians accompany their children and risk assessments are completed for all activities. Risk is also actively monitored, for example in relation to doors and hard floors. Numbers of children attending Wellsprings are variable but on average around eight to ten children attend.
- 3.1.25** Currently, there are no unaccompanied child servers attending at Wells Cathedral in services where the general public attend Wells Cathedral School, and in services which use child servers from the school for closed school



services which are overseen by teachers from the school.

### *Analysis*

- 3.1.26** The auditors judged that there is a range of safely managed provision for children at Wells Cathedral. School visits work on a well-tested system that helps to assure the safety of children and others while in the Cathedral. Volunteers within the department all receive safeguarding training which is carefully managed and recorded.
- 3.1.27** All staff, Education Assistants and volunteers working directly with children were clear on how they might recognise concern and to whom they would report these. However, children within the Education Department or Sunday School are not routinely asked how safe they feel. There is no provision for them to raise a concern, for example via a worry box or other provision.
- 3.1.28** The Education Department requests information from schools regarding pupils but this mainly centres around special educational needs. There are no specific safeguarding questions and the Education Officer would not be made aware of a child visiting the Cathedral about whom there are concerns. The Education Officer does speak with the school lead on arrival, providing an opportunity for information sharing; however, a specific question regarding safeguarding might be useful.

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

- How might safeguarding information be better elicited from schools in order to inform provision and ensure effective safeguarding of visiting pupils?
- How sure is Wells Cathedral that children using their services feel safe and are clear on who they might speak with if they do not? How are the expectations of staff working with them made clear to children within the Cathedral?

### **Adults**

#### *Description*

- 3.1.29** Wells Cathedral represents a place of welcome for those seeking support, worship and shelter. The staff and volunteers therefore regularly engage with those who may be considered vulnerable by virtue of their physical, emotional and mental health needs. This includes a small number of homeless people and others with substance or alcohol abuse issues. Many within the Cathedral, including the virger team, are familiar with these individuals, know them by name and regularly converse with them.
- 3.1.30** There is a practice of not giving money to those seeking it but instead to offer signposting, where needed, to the local services, homeless shelters and food-

banks that can be accessed. The Cathedral café is also able to provide a hot drink where appropriate.

- 3.1.31** The auditors heard that, in some instances, some vulnerable adults have caused a low level of disruption but that the virger team have usually managed to prevent service disruption. This has been managed through using open hand gestures, de-escalation, active listening and allowing the person to speak. Virgers reported having undertaken some training in managing such disruptions but that this was some time ago. Assumed practice within the teams on the Cathedral floor is that de-escalation works better than confrontation.
- 3.1.32** For those seeking or in need of spiritual support, the Cathedral offers this by way of a team of 15 voluntary Day Chaplains and a duty rota of the Canons in residence. There is also a small pastoral team of four who visit people in their own homes. Day Chaplains may be contacted should a member of the public request it or if those working in the Cathedral feel it of benefit.
- 3.1.33** The auditors heard repeatedly of an understanding across the Cathedral of the potential vulnerabilities of volunteers themselves, for example by virtue of their age or health, and the need to both monitor and support them in their work, but that this was not consistently applied.

### *Analysis*

- 3.1.34** The auditors judged that there is a clear ethos of recognising potential vulnerabilities of adults who may visit the Cathedral and that systems are in place to support them. Good use is made of St Katherine's Chapel to offer support for those in distress and there are clear and well-established relationships between teams working on the Cathedral floor, all of whom are safeguarding trained. There is also a positive recognition of the needs of various groups within the Cathedral, including of volunteers themselves, although there is no overarching procedure for support and each Cathedral department managed this slightly differently.
- 3.1.35** However, many staff reported feeling unhappy and some spoke of having developed vulnerabilities because of this which have not been recognised. This is further explored within the report.
- 3.1.36** Those visiting individuals in their homes are well supported and have a good understanding of safeguarding, including a checklist and reinforced expectations of them as members of the pastoral team.
- 3.1.37** Auditors saw much evidence through case work, and heard through examples, of a high quality of safeguarding in specific cases. Work with external agencies is demonstrated and the Cathedral and diocese work well together to offer a safeguarding service. In addition, cases which do not meet a threshold for safeguarding, but where the COO/DSA keep a 'watching brief', are recorded and monitored effectively.



**Questions for the Cathedral to consider**

- Is the Cathedral confident that there are support systems in place for recognising and supporting volunteers who may become vulnerable by virtue of age or disability which is consistently applied across the Cathedral?

## 3.2 CHOIRS AND MUSIC

**3.2.1** 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.

### Choir

#### *Description*

**3.2.2** The Choir at Wells Cathedral has two treble lines: one of 15 boys and one of 17 girls. They sing separately most of time, coming together for major feast days and other services or events. Boy choristers sing Evensong on Tuesdays and Fridays, girl choristers on Mondays and Thursdays, with a duty rota for choristers covering the weekends. Choristers have a break on a Wednesday when the Vicars Choral sing Evensong alone. Both boys and girls have a Head Chorister and a Deputy Head Chorister. They have particular responsibility for musical and social leadership among the choristers, and other senior choristers may also be given some responsibilities.

**3.2.3** In addition to the choristers, there is also a choir called Song Squad which consists of children aged from four to 13 who rehearse weekly in the Chain Gate Hall. Song Squad is run by a qualified teacher with the assistance of volunteers and has recently doubled in size, now having 29 members. Children come mostly from schools in Wells, but some from further afield. Choristers are, on occasion, recruited from Song Squad. Occasionally, Song Squad sing at Evensong alongside the choir. Auditors heard that there are plans to recruit a secondary outreach post who will create a youth choir for the Cathedral, creating a seamless transition.

**3.2.4** Wells' choristers are led by the Director of Music who started at the Cathedral in 2017 as the Assistant Organist, becoming the Director of Music in December 2019. The Director of Music reports to the Canon Precentor and is also the Musical Director of the Wells Cathedral Oratorio Society and a visiting organ teacher at Wells Cathedral School. He has previously held positions at St Paul's Knightsbridge and St Martin-in-the-Fields in Trafalgar Square where he was the principal organist. The Director of Music has completed basic and foundation safeguarding training as well as Leadership Training and Safer recruitment. In addition, as a teacher at Wells Cathedral School, the Director of

Music also completes regular safeguarding training under the Government's statutory guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education* which includes a broad remit such as domestic abuse.

- 3.2.5** The choristers rehearse in the song school which is a bespoke, secure space comprising rehearsal rooms for boy and girl choristers, separate robing and toilet facilities and an area for social gathering and rest. The internal walls of the rehearsal rooms are glass allowing for visibility from the corridor. Access is through a restricted and secured door leading from the Cathedral. There is external access (via a fire door) into the works yard.
- 3.2.6** Choristers are cared for by a team of 18 volunteer chorister chaperones recruited via the usual processes but with additional shadowing arranged by the Music Coordinator who also produces a rota. The chorister chaperones attend rehearsals and services with a responsibility for assuring the welfare of all choristers, being with them when in the Cathedral and managing medical and other needs. Communication between chorister chaperones is good, provided via a WhatsApp group, so that cover is always available.
- 3.2.7** Wells Cathedral School employs a Chorister Coordinator responsible for the welfare of choristers from a school perspective. The Chorister Coordinator acts as a conduit between the school and the Cathedral, receiving and passing on concerns when required to ensure safe practice. The Chorister Coordinator sits within the school's pastoral team and auditors heard that there is daily contact with the Director of Music.
- 3.2.8** All choristers attend Wells Cathedral School and remain in their care until passing into the care of the Director of Music, supported by chorister chaperones. Wells Cathedral benefits from a close association with the Cathedral School and agreed safeguarding procedures are in place. Auditors heard that most safeguarding issues are managed by the school, in conjunction with the Cathedral, and that choristers understand that the Cathedral is an extension of the school. Quarterly chorister meetings are held involving the school and Cathedral.
- 3.2.9** The Dean, Canon Chancellor and Canon Precentor sit on the school's governing body and are required to undertake annual safeguarding updates through the school. Both the Chorister Coordinator and the Director of Music are also members of staff at the school, which strengthens links.
- 3.2.10** The choristers perform with a 'back row' of Vicars Choral. There are 12 adult male singers in the Choir: four altos, four tenors and four basses. Nine are Vicars Choral, who are all professional singers, and three are Choral Scholars, normally younger singers who are at the beginning of their singing careers. All live, as do the Director of Music, Assistant Director of Music, and the Assistant Organist (referred to as the 'Cathedral Organists'), in houses in the medieval Vicars' Close. Vicars Choral take no supervisory responsibility for choristers but do rehearse and perform with them. Within the song school they have separate robing areas and toilets. Vicars Choral are also DBS checked.
- 3.2.11** Any concerns regarding choristers are reported to the school by the Director of Music, copying in the COO. Record keeping is discussed further in section 4.3.

Within the survey carried out as part of this audit, a small number of comments noted the presence of bullying between choristers. Auditors heard that both the school and Cathedral take bullying seriously. The school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) has put in place restorative practice and engaged with chorister parents to provide a talk on 'What is Bullying?'. In addition, the school engages their wellbeing manager to assist.

- 3.2.12** Wells has in place a Chorister Handbook, aimed at parents, Chorister Code of Conduct, a Staff Handbook which contains safeguarding guidelines and guidelines for chaperones. There is currently nothing separate for choristers. There is no social media and e-safety policy or procedure and no staff code of conduct to include behaviour towards children.

### *Analysis*

- 3.2.13** The good working relationship between the Cathedral and the Cathedral School is an area of strength which supports safeguarding of the choristers. Clear and well-managed arrangements for transfer between the school and Cathedral, and the care taken by chorister chaperones, the Chorister Coordinator and Director of Music were evident.
- 3.2.14** The auditors observed a happy relationship between the Director of Music and choristers with a good balance of work and fun. Through the child and adults' survey, there was also a positive reflection of the choirs at Wells Cathedral and the opportunities afforded to choristers. Seventeen (100%) of respondents who completed the survey stated that they enjoyed being a chorister, although some choristers felt that the schedule made it difficult to undertake other activities. Eleven respondents (65%) felt the balance between being a chorister, school work and other activities was either very or moderately good, leaving six respondents (35%) feeling that there was not a good balance. The Cathedral and school have worked together to address the choristers' activity balance and have put in place more flexibility. For example, following a late or complex concert, choristers may miss the beginning of the school day, arriving later. The time of some club activities has been changed to allow choristers to attend and the Chorister Coordinator is vigilant regarding the school calendar, ensuring that consideration has been given to choristers.
- 3.2.15** A small number of respondents to the survey complained of bullying in the choir. Although communication between the Cathedral and the school regarding choristers is good, chorister chaperones advised that they are not permitted to manage behaviour when there are breaks in chorister rehearsals and felt that this might be a risky time both for accidents and bullying or peer on peer abuse. Chaperones are not introduced at the beginning of each rehearsal and many reported that they are not all as well known to choristers as they might be. Choristers are not advised, either at rehearsal or in policy and procedures, of what they can expect from those caring for them and therefore may be reluctant to engage with a chorister chaperone when there are concerns. The survey showed that five (29%) of choristers who responded are 'not at all confident' that their worries would be listened to and that people would help.
- 3.2.16** Bullying does appear to be addressed by the school and therefore effects will

be seen within the Cathedral context. However, auditors judged that action taken against bullying was less evident within the song school. Choristers have a Chorister Code of Conduct, copies of which are pinned to each chorister music stand, but no mention is made of bullying, IT or online bullying. The Chorister Handbook reads as punitive rather than restorative and does not explicitly mention what choristers can expect when bullying issues arise. Currently choristers do not have any input into the handbook or code of practice; the auditors had seen elsewhere that such input produced more useful material.

**3.2.17** The Cathedral does not produce separate information for choristers and their parents, and overall, the auditors found the Chorister Handbook to be formal and even forbidding. For example, there is a list of what a probationer must learn in their first year but no information about how this will be taught and to what depth. Chorister chaperones report that there is on occasion a mismatch between the understanding of parents and the reality of chorister life, and that guidance or information specifically for parents could better manage expectations. Parents who do not have an Anglican background may be confused as to what is expected of them and their child, and several people referred to a need to induct parents as well as children into Cathedral life.

**3.2.18** Song Squad is well managed and run, with the age of the children attending very much considered. Auditors observed a clear enjoyment of the activities and singing. The venue is accessed by a steep flight of stone steps without hand rails and the door at the bottom of the steps remains open, mainly for Covid-19 ventilation, although a volunteer sits at the top of the stairs at all times. Despite this, the building is isolated and some distance from the virger team, and the layout of the room is not well-suited to the activity. The Director of Music felt Song Squad could move back to the education block and this made sense to the auditors.

#### Questions for the Cathedral to consider

- How best can the Cathedral recognise the concerns raised regarding bullying within the choirs, and work with the school to ensure these are well managed?
- How might the Cathedral better utilise chorister chaperones to monitor issues such as bullying in more unstructured times?
- To what extent is the Cathedral confident that choristers understand what they can expect from those caring for them and feel able to share any concerns, including with chaperones or via routes for doing so anonymously?
- Who is best placed to re-produce the Chorister Handbook, Chorister Code of Conduct and any information for parents, to ensure current issues such as peer on peer abuse, bullying and online issues are included?

## Bell ringing

### *Description*

- 3.2.19** The Cathedral and St. Cuthbert's Church operate a joint society of ringers, who ring at both churches. There are about 24 ringers in total and recruitment is mostly by word of mouth.
- 3.2.20** Wells Cathedral has 10 bells which are the heaviest set of 10 bells in the world, providing both a challenge and a high-risk ringing experience and making them unsuitable for those who are learning to ring. All ringers are trained to ring at St Cuthbert's and do not progress to the Cathedral until competent and (in the case of under 18s) adult. Conversely, the lighter bells at St Cuthbert's allow members to continue ringing if they are no longer physically able to safely ring at the Cathedral.
- 3.2.21** Access to the ringing platform is via an internal door from the Cathedral. There is no external access. The tower captains and tower secretary hold the code and a key for the door and the ringing chamber is accessed by 105 steps which are fairly steep. There are always two people in the ringing chamber at any one time to ensure safety.
- 3.2.22** The tower has a safeguarding policy written by the tower secretary with reference to the Central Bellingringing Council, which is available on the Cathedral website. Visiting ringers make themselves known to the tower and are provided with forms to complete. Dates for visitors are arranged and the tower captain or tower secretary also attend.
- 3.2.23** The Annual General Meeting for ringers at Wells is held at St Cuthbert's and chaired by the incumbent there. The Dean of the Cathedral is always invited and responds, attending the annual dinner when possible. The Dean has visited the tower on occasion.
- 3.2.24** Auditors heard that there are arrangements in place to recognise and support ringers who might become vulnerable by virtue of age, and the safeguarding contacts within the Cathedral and diocese are well known. There is always a radio within the tower when people are present so that virgers may be contacted if required.

### *Analysis*

- 3.2.25** The auditors judged that the safeguarding practice of the bell tower at Wells Cathedral is good, with robust procedures in place to mitigate against any risks. The safeguarding policy for ringers was judged by the auditors to be one of the best they had seen.
- 3.2.26** The tower is included as part of the Cathedral itself. Ringers feel valued and are called on regularly. They are pleased that the back row is always reserved for them at major services, so that they can attend when they descend the tower. However, ringers themselves have identified that more could be done to make the tower an integral part of the Cathedral for others. Conversations are

beginning to ensure a display within the Cathedral to include information regarding the bells which will help with this and may even boost recruitment.

#### Questions for the Cathedral to consider

- What steps would help to ensure that the bell tower feels more fully connected to the Cathedral and those within it, and more visible to those outside of it?

### 3.3 CASE WORK (INCLUDING INFORMATION SHARING)

**3.3.1** When safeguarding concerns are raised, a timely response is needed to make sense of the situation, assess and risk and decide if any 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.

#### *Description*

**3.3.2** The auditors judged that case work and information sharing at Wells Cathedral is good and that it is benefitted by close working with the DSA, DSM and external agencies.

**3.3.3** The Cathedral does, however, have an issue in that until the last five years, potential and actual safeguarding situations were not always recognised as such and responded to. In one case, it was proving difficult to deal with behaviour that had been tolerated or ignored in the past. This links to some of the comments made under Culture, in section 5.6.

#### **Effectiveness of responses and information sharing practice**

**3.3.4** The auditors looked at eight case files as part of this audit, which included some complex cases, and discussed many of those cases further in relation to specific areas of the Cathedral through individual conversations. Cases related to vulnerable adults, children and recent abuse allegations. As is discussed further in section 4.2, Wells Cathedral has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) in place with the Diocese of Bath and Wells, which includes support to the Cathedral on all safeguarding case work.

**3.3.5** The auditors found that incidents are reported almost exclusively to the COO, and there is less evidence of knowledge of the DSA and DSM contact details. However, there was evidence of a timely and appropriate response that involves both the COO and DSA team in close collaboration.

**3.3.6** Working with the diocese, appropriate referrals to external agencies were made in a timely way with evidence of good information sharing and relationships. Auditors heard from three external agencies as part of the audit, all of whom were complimentary regarding positive relationships and the working practice



of the DSA.

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

- 3.3.7** The auditors were made aware of a current risk assessment which, while live is on hold due to non-attendance. It will come back into force should attendance re-commence. Auditors also saw a signed agreement with a visiting musician who had been open about his status. In this case, the risk assessment provided by their usual musical venue was used to support the agreement.

### **Quality of recording**

- 3.3.8** Case files were well presented and collated using a 'front sheet' on key information and a chronology of contacts and information throughout the case. Recording of cases for which the Cathedral is keeping a 'watching brief' were also well presented with evidence of appropriate advice from the DSA. All files contained information including email exchanges, meetings and telephone notes, with some files containing extensive records.

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

- How can the Cathedral be seen to move from tolerating and excusing behaviour that has a safeguarding element to recognising and dealing effectively with it?

## **3.4 CLERGY DISCIPLINARY MEASURES**

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

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

- There were no considerations under this heading.

## **3.5 TRAINING**

- 3.5.1** 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 of 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*

- 3.5.2** Wells Cathedral uses the House of Bishops' national training programme and have developed a matrix for safeguarding training to clarify training requirement. The Cathedral has a Learning and Development Framework for 2022, which outlines requirements for training and the types of DBS required for each role.
- 3.5.3** All Cathedral staff and volunteers complete basic (C0) and foundation (C1) safeguarding training prior to employment or volunteering. Completion of the training is logged on the training spreadsheet. Basic training is accessed largely online but face-to-face sessions have been organised for early this year for those who cannot access IT, undertaken by the Diocesan trainer.
- 3.5.4** Domestic abuse training will be completed in 2022 by members of the Cathedral Chapter, staff and volunteers who require it.
- 3.5.5** Leadership training is currently being rolled out to those in leadership positions and will be completed in 2022. Some members of Chapter have already completed the training and auditors heard that they felt this course had been useful and reflective.
- 3.5.6** Staff training records are maintained for volunteers by the Volunteer Coordinator and for staff by the PA to the COO, and are used to identify when refresher training is required. Auditors heard that records are complete and reminders are sent out when training requires refreshing. Currently, the Cathedral is managing to ensure volunteers attend training as they come back after Covid-19.

### *Analysis*

- 3.5.7** The auditors judged that central tracking and monitoring of training is good and that the Cathedral is clear on training completed for each member of staff and volunteer. With a large and active body of volunteers, it is a significant achievement that all have undertaken training or training is planned.
- 3.5.8** Volunteers expressed that safeguarding training is well received and that they understood the requirement for it. However, the auditors also heard how the breadth of training provided through the current suite might not fully provide what is required to cover challenges faced by different departments and public-facing roles. Further contextual training to support good safeguarding practice would be helpful for example; domestic abuse training (particularly for chorister chaperones), and substance abuse and dementia training.



**Questions for the Cathedral to consider**

- What additional contextual and supplementary training would best support those in public-facing roles to identify and manage risk and support those in need?

## 3.6 SAFER RECRUITMENT

### *Description*

- 3.6.1** The safe recruitment of staff falls within the remit of the COO who is also the HR lead. For volunteers, recruitment is the responsibility of the Volunteer Coordinator in conjunction with the Music Coordinator and Education Officer, depending on the role recruited for.
- 3.6.2** Applicants for staff and volunteer positions are required to submit an application form, attend an interview, have two references completed (three for staff) and undertake a DBS check if relevant to the role. DBS checks are administered through an external company and a confirmation letter is returned upon successful completion of a clear check. Where a ‘blemish’ is noted on a DBS, the DSA team is notified and undertake a risk assessment to support a judgement of whether the person can be safely brought into the Cathedral team.
- 3.6.3** Wells Cathedral has a list of roles that require DBS checks, including the level required. This is agreed with the DSM and regularly updated as needed. DBS checks are renewed every three years in line with the diocese.
- 3.6.4** The auditors reviewed four recruitment files of lay staff and volunteers as part of the audit. Files included a safer recruitment checklist, including dates for DBS, right to work in the UK, a confidential declaration and safeguarding training, which is good practice. Files also included evidence of a job description, completed application form, offer letter, references, contract of employment (for staff) and information on induction. This was consistently applied across all records.
- 3.6.5** Some of the files seen contained evidence of interview notes and responses, including attitudinal and safeguarding questions, which is good practice.
- 3.6.6** The Diocese of Bath and Wells has a Safer Recruitment Strategy for 2022, which is also followed by the Cathedral. All those deemed relevant were requested to complete the House of Bishop’s Safer Recruitment training module by the end of January 2022 and to forward certificates for logging on the training record. This has been completed.

### *Analysis*

- 3.6.7** Safer recruitment is the front door of safeguarding for new staff and volunteers and sets the tone of the Cathedral’s commitment. It should present a consistent and clear standard required of all applicants. Auditors judged that at Wells, formalising and standardising the process of recruitment for staff and

volunteers across the Cathedral is evident, but there remain some small gaps in files.

- 3.6.8** The Cathedral has in place a useful Safer Recruitment Tool and Action Plan for 2022 which includes risk, role descriptors and how records are kept. There is a need to review roles against the definition of a regulated activity and to be clear where this document fits into the process.
- 3.6.9** Safer recruitment practice works well but auditors reflected that there is no one person who oversees the process from start to finish. This means some overlap in process and record keeping between the COO, the COO's PA, the Education Officer, the Music Coordinator and the Volunteer Coordinator who work hard to ensure that nothing is missed. There is a real need for a streamlined system of recruitment for all volunteers and staff, to include every aspect of the process and associated checks required for each type of role.

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

- How can best use be made of documents related to safer recruitment and who is best placed to take responsibility for ensuring their consistent use?
- How might the Cathedral look to streamline recruitment processes for both staff and volunteers to ensure overlaps and potential gaps are avoided?

## 4. FINDINGS – ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORTS

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### 4.1 POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND GUIDANCE

#### *Description*

- 4.1.1** Wells Cathedral has adopted the House of Bishop's National Safeguarding Policies and publicise these on the Cathedral's website. In addition, the Cathedral has a Statement of Safeguarding Principles which includes promoting a safe environment and culture, safely recruiting those working or volunteering with children, responding promptly to safeguarding concerns and allegations, caring pastorally for victims and survivors of abuse, as well as those who have allegations made against them, and responding to those who may present a risk to others. These principles are supported by various other policies and guidelines that reference safeguarding.
- 4.1.2** The Safeguarding Principles document is available on the Cathedral's website, together with the complaints policy, which is considered further in section 5.2. The Cathedral's whistleblowing policy is not available on the Cathedral's website.
- 4.1.3** The Cathedral also has a reporting flowchart which outlines the action to be taken when reporting a safeguarding concern for staff and volunteers. This is prominently displayed across most areas of the Cathedral.
- 4.1.4** The Cathedral does not currently have any formal policy or procedure related to lone working. As mentioned above, auditors did not see evidence of a missing children or adults' policy or any information regarding left packages, although reference to lost children is made in the Volunteer Handbook.
- 4.1.5** There is no policy or guidance regarding the use of social media across the Cathedral, either for staff/volunteers or choristers. The staff, volunteer and chorister handbooks require updating and do not include aspects such as sexual harassment, peer on peer abuse, social media, bullying or online safety.

#### *Analysis*

- 4.1.6** The auditors judged that much work has taken place to develop a suite of documents covering many aspects of safeguarding. However, there remain significant gaps and it is unclear whether some documents retain the status of a policy, are guidance or a statement. This has created a slightly confused picture whereby guidance/policy overlaps and is replicated in several places across a large number of documents. Some documents remain undated and responsibility for, including review dates are not recorded.
- 4.1.7** The auditors reflected that the current Safeguarding Principles are minimal and might not adequately cover the detail needed to ensure that all those working within the Cathedral could effectively recognise, report and record concerns (including awareness of issues around consent).
- 4.1.8** As mentioned elsewhere, the auditors were concerned by the lack of any social media policy alongside the lack of a code of conduct for adults, or adoption of

the national guidance, Safer Working Practice.

- 4.1.9** The development of action plans for safer recruitment and training is a positive and helpful step, as are risk assessment templates. The domestic abuse policy is also a useful addition and the subject is currently high on the national safeguarding agenda. However, the policy is short and does not serve to explain the effect of domestic abuse both on adults and children living in a domestically abusive household.
- 4.1.10** Auditors also reflected that there is little information directed solely at chorister parents who might not be familiar with church life.

#### Questions for the Cathedral to consider

- Who is best placed to review the content and range of the existing suite of safeguarding policies, guidance and process within the Cathedral, streamlining to reduce the number and overlap where required?
- What are the current gaps in policy and procedure?

## 4.2 THE DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING ADVISOR/ CATHEDRAL SAFEGUARDING OFFICER

- 4.2.1** Wells Cathedral's COO has the triple role of COO, operational safeguarding lead and Administrator, also holding the role of Chapter Clerk. The role takes responsibility for the majority of safeguarding work across the Cathedral and, in addition, undertakes the Cathedral's HR work. The COO has been in post for three years and brings experience of equivalent posts in both Derby and Lincoln cathedrals, as well as HR in the private sector. The COO is line-managed by the Dean and has undertaken Senior Leadership (C4) Safeguarding Training.
- 4.2.2** The auditors heard how the current COO has, with the Dean, sought to bring significant change in safeguarding within the Cathedral, which has included a greater focus on training, learning from previous concerns and quality assurance of processes.
- 4.2.3** The Cathedral has a close working relationship with the Diocese of Bath and Wells. Casework is supported by the DSA and DSM and, in addition, the Diocesan trainer supports with face-to-face training when required. The current DSA has been in post for two years and has a background in the police public protection. The DSM is new in post and has a background in the probation service and working in prisons. Both the DSA and DSM bring experience from these previous roles, particularly in the assessment of risk.
- 4.2.4** The DSA is supported by an Assistant DSA, the Diocesan safeguarding trainer and an administrative assistant. The Past Cases Review (PCR2) has only

recently been completed at Wells and to support this, the diocese also has in post a PCR2 caseworker.

- 4.2.5** Both the DSA and COO have job descriptions in place that describe their responsibilities for safeguarding. Because it was not possible during the pandemic, at present, the DSA is temporarily seconded to the Cathedral on a full-time basis in order to better understand the safeguarding systems and processes across all areas.

### *Analysis*

- 4.2.6** The auditors judged that the COO/operational safeguarding lead at Wells Cathedral is effective and very well recognised. Cathedral safeguarding work is supported by a good relationship with the diocese and DSA team.
- 4.2.7** Auditors heard that the DSM and DSA are known to staff who are generally aware of their roles, but volunteers were less aware, knowing only how to contact the COO. Within the Cathedral building, there is no visual reminder of who's who in safeguarding, no photographs or contact details for those to whom concerns might be reported. Auditors heard that the majority of safeguarding concerns go directly to the COO and judged that a higher level of publicity regarding the DSA and DSM roles would provide broader points of contact for safeguarding referrals. Advantage could be taken of the DSA's current secondment to the Cathedral in order to raise the profile of the role.
- 4.2.8** The auditors heard consistently, throughout the audit, of the high degree of respect for the current COO, particularly in regard to the volume of work carried out and their open door policy. The COO was recognised by all and consistently identified as the person they would approach were they to have safeguarding concerns. However, from the survey results and some interviews, auditors heard several times that there is a view that the Dean and the COO work closely together and this can feel officious and intimidating, some describing it as 'a culture of fear'. Auditors reflected that such a perception might mean a reluctance to approach the COO with a safeguarding concern. Coupled with the lower visibility of the DSA across the Cathedral, auditors judged this to be a concern.
- 4.2.9** The auditors also shared the concerns of several spoken with that the current role of the COO is not sustainable. The role covers the Cathedral administration, COO and Cathedral safeguarding lead operationally, in addition to being Chapter Clerk and HR lead. Auditors judged that not only is this unlikely to be sustainable, but there is a conflict of interest between the roles of COO/Cathedral safeguarding lead and lead for HR. Auditors saw evidence of cases where the COO managed a safeguarding case which then required an HR investigation, also carried out by the COO under another part of the role.
- 4.2.10** It has been recognised that the COO role requires review and its various aspects should be split to ensure sustainability and continuity should the COO move on. Any changes should also ensure the removal of current conflicts of interests within the role itself.

**Questions for the Cathedral to consider**

- What actions are required to reverse the view of the COO being part of a 'culture of fear' in order to be satisfied that this view is not affecting the safeguarding process?
- How can the multi-roles of the COO be re-distributed to ensure sustainability and remove any conflicts of interest?

### 4.3 RECORDING AND IT SYSTEMS

*Description*

- 4.3.1** The Cathedral has a centralised database of training records, safer recruitment and DBS checks for both staff and volunteers. Records are held securely and shared appropriately when required.
- 4.3.2** Safeguarding concerns are also held centrally by the COO with case files held by the DSA securely. Low level concerns or concerns about which the Cathedral is keeping a watching brief form part of a spreadsheet kept by the COO but covering all areas of the Cathedral.
- 4.3.3** The PCR2 reviewers were concerned that there is no standardised referral format for safeguarding concerns available widely to staff and volunteers, and it is likely that this is one reason why all concerns go to the COO rather than directly to the DSA, who is contracted to provide a service to the Cathedral. A referral form should elicit a higher quality of information and, even if referrals continue to go via the COO, decrease their workload as fewer supplementary questions would be needed.

**Questions for the Cathedral to consider**

- Would a standardised and widely available referral format improve the quality and flow of safeguarding referrals?

## 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. Robust quality assurance enables an organisation to understand its strengths and weaknesses. Potential sources of data are numerous, including independent scrutiny. Quality assurance needs to be strategic and systematic to support accountability and shed light on how well things are working and where there are gaps or concerns.

#### *Description*

**5.1.2** Wells Cathedral does not have a specific strategic safeguarding plan in place in order to shape the direction and growth of the safeguarding service offered. There is also no operational safeguarding plan. However, a verbal or written update is provided by the COO at each Chapter meeting. Safeguarding is also a standing agenda item at each Chapter meeting. The COO is in attendance at Chapter meetings and so is also able to contribute to safeguarding discussions.

**5.1.3** The auditors did not see a written annual report on safeguarding, such as might be submitted by the Dean to the Bishop (see section 5.1 of Key Roles and Responsibilities of Church Office Holders and Bodies Practice Guidance 2017).

**5.1.4** There is a Risk Register related to the Cathedral. Safeguarding appears on the register, but as a reputational issue only. Currently, the Cathedral does not have a safeguarding group at an operational level, but auditors heard that there are plans in place to rectify this.

**5.1.5** The DSA and COO both attend the regular DSAP meetings which provide a level of scrutiny both to the diocese and the Cathedral.

**5.1.6** Chapter is supported in its quality assurance function by the Cathedral Council, which provides scrutiny and challenge to governance on topics such as financial management and strategic planning.

#### *Analysis*

**5.1.7** The auditors judged that Chapter are scrutinous in their seeking of assurances about safeguarding within the Cathedral, but that this is limited by the absence of a strategic safeguarding plan or an operational plan. There is therefore a further opportunity to grow Chapter's safeguarding scrutiny in order to guide the strategic planning for safeguarding and enhance the depth of quality assurance that takes place.

**5.1.8** The close working between the Cathedral and diocese adds a layer of quality assurance which is strong at Wells and allows those leading safeguarding within the Cathedral to benefit from the discussions held at the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP), discussed further in section 5.4.

**5.1.9** The auditors reflected that the development of a safeguarding action plan at



strategic level would be a positive step and, in practice, would support wider ownership of safeguarding, and insight and opportunities for scrutiny and challenge.

#### Questions for the Cathedral to consider

- Who would be best placed to contribute to, and own, a strategic plan for safeguarding?

## 5.2 COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE SAFEGUARDING SERVICE

**5.2.1** A good complaints policy enables people to raise concerns, and to have timely and appropriate consideration of any problems. 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 things.

**5.2.2** Wells Cathedral has a complaints policy which is available on the Cathedral website. The policy makes clear that anonymous complaints are not investigated. It does not provide information regarding who makes the final decisions regarding complaints, or how complaints might be escalated.

**5.2.3** The auditors did not see any cases relating to complaints made about the safeguarding service within the Cathedral.

#### Questions for the Cathedral to consider

- Who is best placed to review the complaints policy?
- How can the Cathedral be satisfied that any anonymous but potentially serious safeguarding complaints are not overlooked?

## 5.3 WHISTLEBLOWING

**5.3.1** Wells Cathedral has a whistleblowing policy in place but it is not publicly available on the Cathedral's website.

**5.3.2** The policy is undated but is taken from the Staff Handbook, which is dated 2017. The policy does not set out protection for those who raise concerns in line with whistleblowing. It also does not provide specific websites for further information, instead providing only the generic government website, meaning



that there is no useful external route for seeking further advice.

#### Questions for the Cathedral to consider

- Who is best placed to review the whistleblowing policy both as a standalone document and within the Staff Handbook?
- How might the Cathedral be satisfied that the whistleblowing policy is disseminated and embedded across all staff and volunteers?

## 5.4 DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING ADVISORY PANEL (DSAP)

### Description

- 5.4.1** Based on the national guidance in *Key Roles and Responsibilities* for DSAPs, 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** In keeping with the close working relationship between the diocese and Cathedral, the COO has been in attendance on the Diocese of Wells DSAP since 2018. There is a specific agenda item at each DSAP meeting specific to Cathedral safeguarding.
- 5.4.3** At present, there is no independent chair of the DSAP, and the role is being covered by the Archdeacon. Auditors were able to meet with both the previous chair and the Archdeacon, who is also a member of Chapter, as part of the audit. Both advised that the Cathedral has moved forward with safeguarding and has a good relationship with the diocese. The DSAP is constituted to provide strategic oversight of safeguarding which the previous independent chair advised had improved.
- 5.4.4** Currently, Wells does not have an operational Cathedral Safeguarding group but a proposal for such a group has been put forward with the intention of beginning this imminently.

### Analysis

- 5.4.5** The auditors judged that the DSAP has been an effective forum for the strategic oversight, scrutiny and development of safeguarding within the Cathedral, particularly since 2018 when the Cathedral was represented on the panel by the current COO. The Cathedral will benefit from the introduction of a Cathedral safeguarding group. Clear terms of reference and membership of this group should be carefully considered to enable this group to support and provide contribution to the governance arrangements already in place.
- 5.4.6** To prevent confusion between strategic and operational leadership, the auditors reflected that any Cathedral safeguarding group would be better

placed as an independent body not formally linked to Chapter but reporting into it. The group should bring together operational managers across the Cathedral to look at an operational action plan which falls from a strategic safeguarding plan, in turn promoting broader ownership and providing more robust assurances to Chapter.

#### Questions for the Cathedral to consider

- What would the Cathedral safeguarding panel's terms of reference best look like in order to support operational leadership of safeguarding, which is separate from Chapter's strategic oversight?
- Who would be best placed to sit on this group in order to promote wider ownership of safeguarding across all areas of 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, can be determinative in how well led the safeguarding function is.

### Theological leadership

#### *Description*

- 5.5.2** As the leader of every aspect of the Cathedral's life, the Dean of Wells has overall theological responsibility for promoting safeguarding. The auditors heard how the current Dean arrived in Wells six years ago wanting to lift and open up the Cathedral community. Auditors heard that the Dean has a strong sense of partnership working, and an understanding of the importance of promoting the message of inclusion, particularly of those on the fringes of society.
- 5.5.3** The auditors heard of some instances of explicit preaching of the safeguarding message, and saw some evidence that safeguarding is either implicitly or explicitly referred to through prayer. The senior clergy and lay officers spoken to as part of the audit talked about their recent Senior Leadership Safeguarding Training, and how they had reflected on the theology of safeguarding. The Dean recognised that safeguarding has perhaps not been as explicit in preaching as it could be. However, at the beginning of each visitor season, the Cathedral holds an 'open door' session which includes a talk by the Dean about safeguarding. The Cathedral also has plans to take part in Safeguarding Sunday.
- 5.5.4** In the survey, 14 respondents (12%) said that safeguarding and the welfare of others was a message they heard through the message of sermons. Fifty respondents (41%) felt that safeguarding was moderately heard and 18 respondents (15%) felt that safeguarding was not a message that they heard at

all through sermons.

- 5.5.5** Despite this, 73% of survey respondents felt that the Dean was either very or moderately active in communicating the importance of safeguarding within the Church. The Dean reported that he is very involved in charities caring for the vulnerable and that there are safeguarding messages within the Chapter letter.

### Analysis

- 5.5.6** The auditors judged that theological leadership of safeguarding at Wells Cathedral is developing but is not yet embedded and is not always overtly visible. Those who have completed the Senior Leadership Safeguarding Training reported that they were clearer on the importance of this and that it was the subject of reflection.

### Questions for the Cathedral to consider

- What opportunities exist, or can be further created, to share the message of the safeguarding and its theological importance?

### Strategic leadership

- 5.5.7** The House of Bishops' *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. This includes the requirement to have a *Promoting a Safer Church* action plan in place that sets out, in line with national and local priorities, how the policy is being put into action, and is reviewed regularly.

### Description

- 5.5.8** The Chapter of Wells Cathedral usually consists of eight members, including the four residentiary Canons, each of whom have oversight of areas of activity which include safeguarding elements, the Dean, three lay members and the Archdeacon. The COO is in attendance at all Chapter meetings.
- 5.5.9** The Dean has been in his current role at the Cathedral for six years although two of these were during the period of Covid-19 when the Cathedral was mainly closed. The Dean describes his time at Wells as being for 'four and two' years because of this marked difference. Ordained as a deacon in 1984 and a priest in 1985, the Dean became Dean of Derby Cathedral in 2010, moving to Wells in 2016.
- 5.5.10** The auditors saw evidence of strategic leadership in safeguarding in the forms of Chapter meeting minute excerpts, the handling of the pandemic, particularly for staff and volunteers, and through clear delineation between strategic and

operational safeguarding leadership.

**5.5.11** Auditors heard that the Cathedral Chapter is strategic in its thinking regarding safeguarding, and lay members reported safeguarding as an integral part of Chapter discussions and priority. One hundred and fourteen respondents (94%) reported that safeguarding is an obvious priority in the Cathedral. However, there is no strategic safeguarding plan currently in place to assist in direction and forward planning.

### *Analysis*

**5.5.12** The auditors judged that the strategic leadership of safeguarding at Wells is good and there is a clear understanding of the strengths and potential weaknesses of safeguarding. However, the lack of a strategic safeguarding plan is a gap at strategic level. Without a plan looking forward over perhaps the next two years, strategic leaders are not working together in an informed way and safeguarding is falling to one or two specific leaders rather than Chapter as a whole.

**5.5.13** The visibility of strategic leadership among the Cathedral community is good but seven survey respondents (6%) felt that those in strategic leadership roles were not at all visible in the Cathedral. As most of the respondents (49%) were volunteers or congregants, auditors judged that there remain pockets where visibility is not yet where it needs to be.

**5.5.14** The auditors heard of the commitment to safeguarding shown by the Dean, Canons and other senior leaders. However, auditors received a high number of written concerns from those completing the survey and similar issues from those spoken to as part of the audit that, while the Dean is committed to safeguarding, there is an underlying but very evident message that things must be completed in a certain way. Where standards fall short or are different from that expected, staff and volunteers report that they are made to feel fear and unhappiness. This takes the form of loss of temper, shouting and a reported embodiment of the very power imbalance reflected as potentially abusive in the leadership training undertaken.

**5.5.15** Auditors heard that the Chapter are aware of some of these concerns and yet its members have not been able to challenge or to prevent such power imbalance, which dominated responses regarding strategic leadership during this audit.

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

- How can the adoption of a high-challenge, high-support approach be speedily achieved by strategic leaders?
- How can the visibility of strategic leaders be improved to include all aspects of the Cathedral?

- What are the barriers to creating a strategic safeguarding plan?

## Operational leadership

### *Description*

- 5.5.16** Wells Cathedral benefits from a well experienced and impactful COO, whose operational role is clearly defined and recognised by all those within it.
- 5.5.17** This role is supported by several others who fulfil a degree of operational leadership (i.e. Education Officer, Director of Music, Volunteer Coordinator and the Head Virger), all bringing a good degree of prior experience and expertise to their roles and, in turn, supported by well-informed and effective teams.
- 5.5.18** There are some established routes to bringing this group together formally, for example the regular diary and staff meetings, which also serve to improve the links between operational and strategic leadership. Operational links between the Cathedral School and the Cathedral are also in place and effective with regular meetings between the Director of Music and the school DSL and Chaperone Coordinator. However, between operational leaders, much of the coordination and contact happens through informal mechanisms such as ‘walking the floor’, passing conversations and the ‘open-door’ policy of the COO.
- 5.5.19** Operational leadership of safeguarding within the Cathedral is concentrated in the role of the COO which is multi-faceted and busy (see section 4.2 above). Many staff and volunteers commented on the long hours the COO works and expressed a concern for the post holder’s welfare.
- 5.5.20** The Cathedral does not have in place a Cathedral safeguarding group working at an operational level to draw together the leaders across the Cathedral. Neither is there a strategic safeguarding plan from which operational risks can be assessed or actions can be drawn.

### *Analysis*

- 5.5.21** The auditors judged that the operational leadership of safeguarding in Wells Cathedral generally works well and is embedded across departments. It was clear through conversations that those in operational leadership roles are having an impact, and are visible and available. Those spoken with felt able to approach and involve the COO’s support, and indeed that of the DSA team, and had confidence in their responses.
- 5.5.22** However, this operational work is not underpinned by consistently effective policy (see section 4 above) or formal routes for planning and discussion. The communication between operational leaders of safeguarding remains informal and is reliant on the individuals currently in post to work effectively. The development of more formal routes of bringing together all those with an operational interest in safeguarding such as the planned Cathedral safeguarding group, will provide a further opportunity to underpin this with more formal routes of communication, collaboration and standardisation.
- 5.5.23** Some criticism has been levied at the COO for the management of operational

safeguarding and for what some have called ‘micromanagement’ across the range of their responsibilities. Auditors judged that the role is unsustainably large in its current form and there is high potential for oversight to become intrusive or overbearing in order to maintain quality. Auditors heard that the Cathedral Chapter plans to look at resources and that there is already an agreement in place for a restructuring of the COO role to address this.

#### Questions for the Cathedral to consider

- How might more formal routes of communication between operational safeguarding leaders be managed?
- How best can they be linked with the future introduction of the Cathedral’s safeguarding group?
- What is required to ensure the review of the COO’s role includes all aspects of concern and sustainability?

## 5.6 CULTURE

**5.6.1** The most critical aspect of safeguarding relates to the culture within any organisation. In a Church of England context, that can mean, for example, the extent to which priority is placed on safeguarding individuals as opposed to the reputation of the Church, or the ability of all members of the Church to think the unthinkable about friends and colleagues. SCIE’s experience auditing safeguarding in faith contexts more broadly suggests that in areas where there is experience among senior clergy of previous serious abuse cases, a culture of openness and humility in approaching safeguarding issues can be stronger and accompanied by 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.

**5.6.2** Any cathedral should strive for an open learning culture where safeguarding is a shared responsibility, albeit supported by experts, and which encourages people to raise concerns about how things are working in order that they can be addressed. 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.

### *Description*

**5.6.3** As mentioned above, the Cathedral’s operational safeguarding lead role is a subset of the HR lead, Cathedral Administrator, COO and Chapter Clerk role, meaning operational leadership for safeguarding is concentrated into one role. Strategic Leadership falls to the Dean meaning that the entire safeguarding structure falls to only two people. The Canon Precentor holds the Chapter Lead for safeguarding but in practice it did not feel as if the Dean had delegated the responsibility but instead retained it.

**5.6.4** Wells’ self-assessment of safeguarding that was submitted to auditors in advance of this audit, showed a definite sense that safeguarding is a priority in



all that is done within the Cathedral and this was reflected in conversations and the survey carried out prior to the audit. Conversely, however, many concerns regarding the culture within the Cathedral were also highlighted. Comments such as ‘culture of fear’, the administrator being the Dean’s ‘right-hand man’ and therefore questions about where to go if there is a concern, staff ‘living in fear’, that being at the Cathedral was ‘the most unhappy time of my life’ a ‘power imbalance’, ‘misuse of power’, ‘treading on eggshells’ and ‘a feeling of heaviness’ when entering the Cathedral. Similar comments were also tangible through the conversations held with individuals during the audit, and were so prevalent as to be the dominant view, of those who took part, regarding the culture within the cathedral.

- 5.6.5** Some staff and volunteers reported that this way of managing from the highest level has begun a cascade of management style by others, which is beginning to create a toxic and unhappy culture within the Cathedral, quite unlike the ‘happy excellence’ that the auditors were told is the aim.
- 5.6.6** Despite this, staff and volunteers are supportive of each other where possible there was a notable culture of a lack of complacency about the need for continued improvements within roles and a recognition of what these needs are. Auditors saw substantial evidence of well-embedded support for visitors and children within the Cathedral.
- 5.6.7** Vicars’ Close (see section 2.2.5 above), where a significant proportion (28%) of lay staff live, was seen by the auditors to raise several issues in terms of culture. The houses are within sight of the Cathedral; convenient but liable to make one feel that one is never ‘off duty’ if one is in residence. To the auditors, it sounded uncomfortably close to being a closed community. The auditors heard that the houses are typically cold and damp inside and that, while the Cathedral provides the repairs required of a landlord, such is the maintenance budget, that anything above a basic specification must be funded at the occupant’s expense. The people who live there are not tenants, so lack the usual rights of tenants in tied houses. Fewer of the Vicars Choral seemed to have genuinely outside ‘day jobs’ than might be expected, with many (and their partners) working in the school or Cathedral office. There is little privacy, given the proximity of the houses and the number of visiting tourists, who wander up and down what they see as a visitor attraction.
- 5.6.8** When the auditors talked to residents they heard a lot of anger about the impact of living on Vicars’ Close, and thought that this tends to be projected upwards towards those in senior positions, and to facilitate a culture of complaint, which, even if justified, tends to make people fractious and discontented. It is also the type of community that can easily split into subcultures which leave some on the outside and, at their worst, give permission to subgroups to behave in a way that would not meet the standards of a code of conduct. The auditors heard that there have been instances of minor substance abuse and, albeit several years ago, the involvement of children from the choir.

### *Analysis*

- 5.6.9** The auditors judged that safeguarding is a commonly understood priority

across the Cathedral and many opportunities are being taken to further reinforce this culture. However, there remain areas of inconsistency in the more public messaging around this.

- 5.6.10** Many members of staff and volunteers felt that the culture within the Cathedral had made them feel fearful, powerless and without a voice. Auditors judged that perhaps excellence has become tainted by perfectionism and standards that are too high to be maintained one hundred per cent of the time, leaving too many people with a constant fear of failure. Auditors reflected that the Church of England's *Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse*, which includes characteristics of healthy and safe church culture, provides a useful comparison.
- 5.6.11** Other staff felt that they had been made vulnerable (under the definition of a vulnerable adult) because the behaviour they faced had created physical illness. They were suffering what they felt was abusive behaviour and they could not protect themselves from this because they were ill. Staff in this situation felt that their vulnerability had gone broadly unnoticed.
- 5.6.12** Auditors judged that the safeguarding culture within Wells Cathedral is divided. The safeguarding response including recruitment, record keeping, case management and support for choristers, and children and adults visiting the cathedral is strong. Joint working between the DSA and COO assists these strengths, as does close working between the Cathedral and Wells Cathedral School. This culture is embedded and supported and should now be underpinned with clearer policy and procedures to formalise practice.
- 5.6.13** However, strategic and operational oversight of safeguarding of the Cathedral's own staff, and challenge of hyper critical or punitive practice, has been lacking. This unacceptable practice is beginning to cascade downwards from other managers, causing an extension of this culture. It is also compounded by staff living in close quarters within Vicars' Close.
- 5.6.14** The issue of Vicars' Close was discussed several times during the audit, and it is hard to envisage a viable solution. At present, the terms on which people live there creates a dependency which then risks subtly infantilising people until they act out their feelings in a way that is not adult. Auditors reflected that it might be possible to create, over time, a more mixed economy where staff houses were interspersed with privately rented houses whose occupants had no professional connection with the Cathedral.

#### Questions for the Cathedral to consider

- What considerations are required to address the issues of culture within the Cathedral for staff and volunteers and to reverse the concerns they have raised?
- How might the Cathedral create a more balanced and diverse community in Vicars' Close?
- How might the Cathedral's senior leadership become perceived by staff as supportive and enabling rather than critical and blaming?



## 6. CONCLUSIONS

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- 6.1.1** The virger team is well recognised and effective in their arrangements for the safety and security of the site and visitors. There is some further work to be done to ensure that this continues to be underpinned by agreed procedures to ensure that the Cathedral is both a place of welcome and safety.
- 6.1.2** There is a range of safely managed provision for children at Wells Cathedral.
- 6.1.3** There is a positive recognition of the needs of visitors to the Cathedral and support is available and well managed. Volunteers who become vulnerable by virtue of age or illness are recognised and supported. Potential vulnerabilities of staff and volunteers which have arisen from the culture and management of the Cathedral have not always been recognised.
- 6.1.4** Much good work has taken place within the choirs in recent years to strengthen and reinforce its safeguarding efforts and there is a clear priority placed on the welfare of choristers. Links with the school are excellent. Some concerns around incidents of bullying are noted and this requires further work.
- 6.1.5** The safeguarding practice of the bell tower at Wells Cathedral is strong, with tried, tested and robust procedures in place to mitigate against any risks.
- 6.1.6** Case work and information sharing at Wells Cathedral is a strength and is benefitted by close working with the DSA/DSM and external agencies.
- 6.1.7** Training is centrally tracked and well managed and all within the Cathedral have received or have safeguarding training planned.
- 6.1.8** Safer recruitment is standardised and evident. However, its process is disjointed and there remains concern from those managing the system that something will be missed. Streamlining of the system is required.
- 6.1.9** Safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, but there are omissions and overlaps.
- 6.1.10** The COO at Wells Cathedral is effective, well recognised and regarded. Cathedral safeguarding work is supported by a very strong relationship with the diocese, and DSA team.
- 6.1.11** Chapter are scrupulous in their seeking of assurances about safeguarding within the Cathedral and there is evidence of quality assurance. However, Chapter has not adequately challenged the current culture of unhappiness for staff and some volunteers which has made them vulnerable.
- 6.1.12** The DSAP has been an effective forum for the oversight, scrutiny and development of safeguarding within the Cathedral. The introduction of a Cathedral safeguarding panel will be a positive step.
- 6.1.13** While the theological leadership of safeguarding is recognised and has developed at Wells Cathedral, it is not always overtly visible to those that are

part of the Cathedral community.

- 6.1.14** The strategic leadership of safeguarding at Wells Cathedral is mixed. Safeguarding systems are in place and in the main work well, but Chapter has not challenged culture, and leadership from the Dean is perceived by many as intimidating. The Cathedral does not have an overarching safeguarding plan.
- 6.1.15** The operational leadership of safeguarding in Wells Cathedral is good but concentrated in one person. Knowledge of the DSA's role and route to reporting directly to them is less well known. There is an opportunity to underpin current practice with more formal routes of communication and a review of roles.
- 6.1.16** Safeguarding is a commonly understood priority across the Cathedral and many opportunities are being taken to further reinforce this culture. However, the culture for staff and volunteers is polarised with a feeling of general unhappiness and fear.

## APPENDIX

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### Information provided to auditors

In advance of the audit, the Cathedral sent through:

- Brief description of Wells Cathedral, January 2022
- Who's who at Wells Cathedral, 2022
- Epiphany and Lent Choir Calendar for 2022
- Weekly Music and Choristers' meeting agenda (undated)
- Church of England factsheet, September 2018
- Virger's Statement of Safeguarding and Pastoral Care, 15 January 2022
- Home Visiting Risk Assessment Checklist
- Responding Well to Domestic Abuse Policy (undated)
- Cathedral and Diocesan Safeguarding Arrangements, January 2020
- Wells Cathedral Training Plan and Evaluation, 2022
- Chapter Statement of Safeguarding Principles, 24 January 2022
- Chorister Code of Conduct, September 2021
- Chorister Handbook, January 2022
- Chorister Meeting minutes, 18 March 2021, 17 June 2021 and 30 September 2021
- Complaints Policy, December 2021
- Complaints Procedure, 2021
- Diocese Safer Recruitment Strategy, 2022
- Safer recruitment Tool and Action Plan, 20 January 2022
- Policy Statement of the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders, 2016
- Diocesan Training Strategy, 2022
- Secondment agreement for DSA, 10 December 2020
- Volunteer Handbook, January 2022
- Wells Cathedral Learning and Development Framework, 2022
- Extract of Chapter Meetings, 26 October 2021 and 23 November 2021
- Hirer Safeguarding Form, July 2019
- Responding to a Safeguarding Concern Wells, 2022
- Whistleblowing Policy (undated)

- Ringing Safeguarding Policy, 3 January 2021
- Roles Requiring DBS Checks and Training Needs Document, January 2022
- Wells Cathedral Staff Handbook, 2017
- Wells Cathedral Statement of Safeguarding and Pastoral Care
- Risk Assessment Guided Tours for Schools and Families, 5 December 2018
- Risk Assessment School Visits
- Guide for Visiting Choirs (undated)
- Safeguarding Form for Visiting Choirs
- Guidelines for Chorister Chaperones, December 2021
- Wells Cathedral and Wells Cathedral School Joint Safeguarding Agreement, 2021
- Letter to Parents regarding Publicity Photographs, December 2021
- Safeguarding Checklist – House of Bishops, 2015
- Past Case review (PCR2) Action Plan
- PCR2 Independent Report for the Diocese of Bath and Wells (undated)
- Vicars' Close Street Plan
- Map of Wells Cathedral
- Wells Cathedral Precincts Revision, 2012
- DSM Job Description, April 2021
- DSA Job Description (undated)
- Safeguarding Self Audit
- Presentation to Chapter, November 2019
- Safeguarding Report (verbal) to Chapter, 28 September 2021
- Wells Cathedral Risk Register, 20 December 2021
- Key Roles and Safeguarding Governance (undated)
- Role Description for the Cathedral Chapter Operational Safeguarding Lead (undated)
- Role Descriptions for the Cathedral Operational Safeguarding Lead, January 2022
- Wells Cathedral Statement for Safeguarding for Pastoral Care, January 2022
- Risk Assessment Checklist for Home Visiting
- Joint Safeguarding Agreement, 2021
- Diocesan Safeguarding Plan, 2022

## Participation of organisation staff

The auditors had conversations with:

- The Dean
- The Lay Chapter member
- The Chief Operating Officer/Chapter Clerk and Cathedral Safeguarding Lead
- The Diocesan Safeguarding Manager
- The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor
- The Canon Precentor
- The Canon Pastor
- The Canon Chancellor
- The Education Officer
- The Director of Music
- The Director of Song Squad/Wellsprings
- The Head Virger
- The Ringing Master
- The Ringing Secretary
- Wells Cathedral School Head Master
- Wells Cathedral School DSL
- Wells Cathedral School Head of lower school
- Wells Cathedral Chorister Coordinator
- Chair of DSAP (previous)
- Interim Chair of DSAP
- DBS Coordinator
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Music Coordinator
- Volunteer Chaperones and Education volunteers

## What records/files were examined?

The auditors reviewed:

- Children's survey responses
- Adult's survey responses
- Staff recruitment files
- Volunteer recruitment files
- Safeguarding case files



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