

**Independent Safeguarding Audit of
Lincoln Diocesan Board of Finance
and Lincoln Cathedral**

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
1 <i>Introduction</i>	3
Part One - Lincoln Diocesan Board of Finance	5
2 <i>Context</i>	6
3 <i>Progress</i>	7
4 <i>Culture, Leadership and Capacity</i>	9
5 <i>Prevention</i>	24
6 <i>Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk</i>	31
7 <i>Victims and Survivors</i>	40
8 <i>Learning, Supervision and Support</i>	47
9 <i>Conclusion</i>	51
Part Two - Lincoln Cathedral	53
10 <i>Context</i>	54
11 <i>Progress</i>	56
12 <i>Culture, Leadership and Capacity</i>	58
13 <i>Prevention</i>	74
14 <i>Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk</i>	80
15 <i>Victims and Survivors</i>	86
16 <i>Learning, Supervision and Support</i>	88
17 <i>Conclusion</i>	91
Appendices	93
18 <i>Appendix 1 – DBF Recommendations</i>	94
19 <i>Appendix 2 – Cathedral Recommendations</i>	108
20 <i>Appendix 3 – Glossary of Abbreviations</i>	117



Introduction

1 Introduction

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

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

- Over 700 documents being collated and analysed prior to the Audit's fieldwork.
- A range of interviews being held with Church Officers (staff and volunteers), external partners, victims, survivors and other stakeholders.
- 634 anonymous survey responses being received, which gathered input from key communities connected to the Church. These were submitted by victims and survivors, children and young people as well as those worshipping or working within the DBF, the Cathedral and parishes.
- Six focus groups.
- A confidential contact form being made available via a dedicated webpage.
- In total, the Audit undertook 49 separate engagement sessions reaching 108 people.

¹ https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/national-safeguarding-standards-and-quality-assurance-framework_sep23.pdf



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

Part One - Lincoln Diocesan Board of Finance

2 Context

- 2.1 Covering the historic county of Lincolnshire and parts of Cambridgeshire, the Diocese of Lincoln is a predominantly rural area located within the East Midlands. It covers approximately 2,670 square miles and encompasses three local authorities, Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire and North-East Lincolnshire. The Diocese is structured into three archdeaconries, which are further subdivided into ten rural deaneries. Within these, there are 486 parishes and 615 places of worship.
- 2.2 The Diocese encompasses a diverse landscape, from tranquil coastal towns along the Wash, to urban centres lining the A1. A strong agricultural heritage, areas of industrialisation, market towns, a vibrant coastal community and a rich history of religious and artistic expression, combine to create a unique cultural identity. Tourism remains an important feature to the area, with bustling seaside resorts contrasting with nature reserves like Gibraltar Point. However, despite these attractions, economic hardship is present, particularly in North-East Lincolnshire, which ranks among the most deprived areas in the country.
- 2.3 The total population within the Lincoln Diocese area is estimated to be just over one million. The Diocese hosts many historically renowned churches, abbeys and of course, its Cathedral. In 2022, the average weekly attendance at these churches was 10,900.
- 2.4 Locally, there have been several investigations into non-recent church-based abuse within the Diocese and several independent reports and reviews have previously been undertaken. This included the DBF working with the police as part of *Operation Redstone*.²

² Operation Redstone is a Lincolnshire police investigation into non-recent sexual offences.

3 Progress

- 3.1 Collectively, the SCIE safeguarding audit and PCR2 made 25 considerations / recommendations for Lincoln DBF. These covered a range of issues, including capacity, safer recruitment, supervision and appraisal systems, case management and support for victims and survivors. The Audit was reassured that initial actions were met, with some being subsumed into subsequent plans or superseded by national developments. Key areas, such as safer recruitment, effective casework, and raising awareness of safeguarding remain priorities for ongoing improvement.
- 3.2 The SCIE audit was published in January 2018 and resulted in 16 considerations, all of which were accepted. A dedicated action plan was developed in response, which was overseen by the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP). The Audit heard that learning and the implementation of SCIE considerations were still being discussed when the new Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) came into post.
- 3.3 The PCR2 was published in September 2022. This review resulted in nine local recommendations which were all accepted by the DBF. A formal action plan was not developed to oversee progress, although relevant tasks were allocated to operational leads for completion. Furthermore, recommendations arising from PCR2 were factored into the creation of the Diocesan Safeguarding Strategy.
- 3.4 Following *Operation Redstone*, the DBF participated in Section 11 Audits conducted in partnership with the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) and Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB). These audits focused on ensuring the DBF and Cathedral had mandatory safeguarding requirements in place as set out for children in the Children Act 2004 and for adults under the Care Act 2014. These audits were completed

in June 2024. This collaborative approach is considered good practice and should be maintained.

3.5 While Lessons Learned Reviews (LLRs) require improvement, particularly regarding their implementation and impact, the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) is committed to addressing this area. The DBF plans to integrate learning from local and national reviews, including the Section 11 Audits, into a revised safeguarding strategy and delivery plan. This will ensure LLRs are more effective in driving positive change and improving safeguarding practice.

4 Culture, Leadership and Capacity

Culture

- 4.1 During discussions and focus groups, a number of individuals reflected on how the culture had improved in recent years, highlighting the introduction of better systems and policies, and improved people management as key factors. This positive cultural shift is reflected in the fact that a significant majority of all groups surveyed stated that they believe a safeguarding culture is now embedded; a position reinforced by the top three words used to describe culture across the DBF and parish workforce: 'supportive', 'respectful' and 'welcoming'.
- 4.2 Reassuringly, the overwhelming majority of the DBF and parish workforce knew who their safeguarding leads were, and all respondents from the parish community were able to name their Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO). Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of both the parish and DBF workforce, along with almost all respondents from the parish community, agreed that they felt safe in their place of worship.
- 4.3 That said, many of those engaged by the Audit felt there could be a disconnect amongst senior staff, including between the Bishop and Archdeacons. This related to a lack of structure and inconsistency in the application of a single vision and approach to safeguarding amongst senior clergy. Primarily, this related to the roles of the Suffragan Bishops and Archdeacons.

Leadership

- 4.4 The Diocesan Bishop demonstrated a clear and unambiguous commitment to safeguarding. He acknowledged his overall accountability and the need to build upon the progress made in recent years. He was keen to establish a more coherent and uniform approach to safeguarding across the senior leadership team.

- 4.5 Evidence gathered through discussions, focus groups, and the examination of written material, including clergy (Blue) files, demonstrated the Diocesan Bishop's commitment to authoritative safeguarding practice. This is particularly evident in his investment in the growth of the safeguarding team and its integration within the DBF.
- 4.6 The Diocesan Bishop has been well-supported by a highly experienced Diocesan Secretary with a strong understanding of leadership and safeguarding. Together, they have laid the foundations for a more collaborative approach to safeguarding at the leadership level.
- 4.7 However, safeguarding leadership across the senior clergy team is less well developed. Several key individuals went as far as to describe the arrangements as 'dysfunctional', with others suggesting there had, at times, been unhelpful dynamics between the Suffragan Bishops and Archdeacons. Regardless of the detail, this has led to frustration, a breakdown in relationships and a lack of grip concerning safeguarding responsibilities. To this end, greater clarity is needed.

Suffragan Bishops

- 4.8 Suffragan bishops should take on a more active role in ensuring clergy compliance with safeguarding training and DBS checks. This could involve them chairing meetings with clergy who have not completed the required training or prompting them to address any outstanding requirements. To empower Suffragan Bishops in this role, the Audit makes the following recommendations.

Recommendation D1: Define Roles and Responsibilities:

The Diocesan Bishop, in collaboration with the DSA/O and the DSAP Chair, should develop a formal policy or framework document that specifically outlines the safeguarding responsibilities of Suffragan Bishops. This document should define expectations regarding:

- a) Monitoring clergy compliance with safeguarding training.
- b) Following up on incomplete DBS checks.
- c) Chairing meetings with clergy who have not fulfilled safeguarding requirements.
- d) Reporting concerns to the Diocesan Bishop and / or DSA.

Recommendation D2: Provide Support, Resources, and Training:

The DSA should ensure Suffragan Bishops have access to:

- a) Up-to-date safeguarding training materials and resources.
- b) Regular briefings and updates from the safeguarding team.

Recommendation D3: Review and Evaluation:

The DSA, in consultation with the Suffragan Bishops and the DSAP Chair, should review the effectiveness of these measures after one year and recommend and agree any necessary adjustments with the Diocesan Bishop.

Archdeacons

4.9 The current safeguarding framework for Archdeacons, whilst well-intentioned, lacks structure and consistency. This is evident in the absence of a standardised approach to visitations, leading to potential inconsistencies in how safeguarding is integrated and assessed. Furthermore, communication and information sharing with the safeguarding team is hampered by a lack of structured briefing and debriefing processes around visitations.

Recommendation D4: The DBF should develop a more structured collaborative framework, which should ensure that Archdeacons' visitations and other engagements at Deanery and parish levels consistently reinforce and promote good safeguarding practice through the following:

- a) Standardised visitation procedures that set out clear and consistent approaches to visitations with defined procedures for integrating and assessing safeguarding.
- b) The delivery of mandatory briefings before visitations to equip Archdeacons with the necessary safeguarding information and guidance, and structured debriefing processes to ensure feedback is shared with the Safeguarding Team.

4.10 To reinforce operational independence and to consolidate and professionalise safeguarding leadership within and across the Diocese, the Audit also makes the following recommendations.

Recommendation D5: Establish a Director of Safeguarding Role

To enhance safeguarding leadership and ensure robust independent oversight, the DBF should establish a Director of Safeguarding role. This role should be structured to provide the highest levels of operational independence and be recognised as the authoritative voice on safeguarding matters. This will provide greater autonomy and credibility when challenging senior clergy and ensure that safeguarding is prioritised at the highest level.

To ensure the effectiveness of this role, the following is required:

- a) **Clearly defined reporting lines and decision-making authority:** The Director should be a member of, and report to, the Bishop's Council, Chapter, and Senior Leadership Team (SLT). This will ensure direct access to key decision-makers and facilitate effective communication and collaboration.

- b) **Formal memorandum of understanding:** A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) should be established between the DBF, Parish Parochial Church Councils (PCCs), and the Cathedral, clearly stating that the Director of Safeguarding has the responsibility and authority to provide insight, oversight, advice, and support to any church body within the Diocese. This will formalise the Director's authority and ensure their role is understood and respected across all levels of the Church.
- c) **Escalation pathways:** The Director must have the ability to escalate concerns directly to higher church authorities, including the National Director of Safeguarding, if necessary. This will provide an essential safeguard in situations where concerns are not addressed adequately within the Diocese.
- d) **Adequate resources and staffing:** The Director requires sufficient resources and staffing to effectively deliver and oversee safeguarding across the Diocese, including the Cathedral. This cohort of staff should cover all professional safeguarding personnel, including those deployed in the Cathedral, with additional resources to backfill the post of DSA/DSO and at least one additional Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (ADSA).
- e) **Independent safeguarding directorate:** Amalgamate all safeguarding resources into an operationally independent Diocesan Safeguarding Directorate, led by the Director of Safeguarding. This will consolidate expertise, streamline processes, and enhance the overall effectiveness of safeguarding within the diocese.

Governance

4.11 The DBF operate a range of appropriate governance and oversight meetings. These reflect the expectations of the Church and relevant requirements, such as those issued by the Charity Commission.

4.12 Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at Bishop's Council, Synod meetings, and Bishop's staff meetings. This ensures that safeguarding is consistently discussed and

addressed at the highest levels. Furthermore, the DSA/O is a member of the Bishop's staff meeting by right, which is good practice and demonstrates a strong commitment to a safeguarding first focus.

4.13 The routine one-to-one monthly safeguarding meeting between the Bishop and DSO is also a strength. However, to further enhance this practice, it is recommended that:

Recommendation D6: A formal structure for the one-to-one meeting between the Bishop and DSO should be implemented. This should include a set agenda with agreed minutes to evidence decisions, agreed actions, and provide a clear record of discussions on sensitive issues.

4.14 The Bishop has highlighted his intention to hold broader safeguarding meetings, which would include the Diocesan Secretary, senior clergy, and the DSA/O. This is a positive step towards ensuring a more consistent approach to safeguarding across leaders. To further strengthen strategic oversight, the Diocesan Bishop could include the Dean and Cathedral Safeguarding Lead (CSL). To help structure and focus such a meeting, the Audit makes the following recommendation:

Recommendation D7: To ensure a consistent and collaborative approach to safeguarding at the leadership level, the Diocesan Bishop should implement regular strategic safeguarding meetings with the following attendees:

- a) Diocesan Secretary
- b) Senior Clergy
- c) DSA/O
- d) DSAP Chair
- e) Dean

- f) Cathedral Safeguarding Lead (CSL)

To provide structure and focus, these meetings should:

- g) Be held quarterly.
- h) Follow a set agenda, that includes reviewing risk registers.
- i) Include agreed minutes to record key discussions, decisions, and action points.

The DSAP

4.15 The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) is led by a Chair with credible, relevant experience. This represents a key strength in the safeguarding scrutiny framework of the Diocese as a whole. Since their appointment, the Chair has strengthened the functioning of the DSAP, notably by reconfiguring its terms of reference. This has resulted in a sharper focus on National Safeguarding Standards and enhanced oversight of safeguarding action plans, providing valuable reassurance and accountability.

4.16 The Chair has also improved the composition of the DSAP, broadening its membership to include external representatives from the voluntary sector and the police. Whilst securing representation from both adult and children's services at the local authority has proven challenging (due to their capacity issues), the chair's professional network helps to mitigate this by providing alternative avenues for accessing information and expertise.

Recommendation D8: The DSAP Chair, with support from the DSA/O, should maintain regular contact with local authority services, offering flexibility towards DSAP attendance and exploring alternative ways to involve them, such as:

- a) Focused quarterly (virtual or in person) one-to-one meetings with the chair of relevant multi-agency partnership boards.
- b) Participating in joint training events.

- c) Establishing informal information-sharing channels. (Sharing written reports/Lesson Learned Reviews and Adult and Children’s Safeguarding Practice Reviews or other relevant updates).
- d) Clearly document within DSAP meeting minutes how the Chair's professional network and other strategies are being utilised to mitigate the lack of direct representation from local authority services. This will provide transparency and demonstrate that alternative avenues for accessing information and expertise are being actively pursued.

4.17 The DSAP currently benefits from the participation of the highly regarded DST victim / survivor advocate. This ensures that victims and survivors voices are represented within meetings. The Audit is aware that the Chair wishes to enhance victim and survivor engagement, and to this end they are at an advanced stage of developing a survivor focus group. To support this work, the Audit makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation D9: To develop and maintain a multi-faceted approach that ensures victim and survivor voices are heard and their needs considered in the safeguarding decision-making processes, the DSAP should:

- a) Continue utilising the existing conduit for survivor voices through the DST’s victim / survivor advocate, allowing for and promoting trauma-informed engagement.
- b) Ensure that the chair of the survivor focus group (once established) has a seat on the DSAP if they desire, providing a direct link between the group and the DSAP's oversight function.
- c) Keep the invitation open for survivors to attend the DSAP if they wish.
- d) Plan outreach events, whereby members of DSAP attend established victim and survivors’ forums to listen and learn.
- e) Facilitate listen and learn events by providing spaces within the Church estate for new victims and survivor groups to meet.

4.18 The Chair plans to develop a performance management framework for the DSAP. The Audit supports this approach, as it would allow for better scrutiny and challenge. Critically, it should focus on measuring delivery, impact, and outcomes of all safeguarding activity.

Recommendation D10: To enhance the DSAP's scrutiny function and to ensure effective monitoring of safeguarding activity across the Diocese, a system for receiving regular written updates from key safeguarding partners should be implemented.

- a) DSAP should identify and agree which agencies will be required to submit written updates. This may include the DST, Victims / Survivors Advocate, PSOs (representative), Archdeacons, CSL, DSLs in Cathedral linked schools, relevant Diocesan Departments (e.g., education, children & youth).
- a) Updates should be structured against a defined template that sets out the required format and contents.
- b) The frequency of updates should be agreed by DSAP, which could be quarterly or biannually.
- c) The updates should request evidence of impact. This would require partners to provide evidence of the impact of their safeguarding work, including statistics, case studies, or examples of good practice.
- d) Formal consideration of internal safeguarding reassurance audits, outcomes of LLRs and updates on associated action plans.
- e) The updates should be a standard agenda item at each DSAP meeting, with dedicated time being allocated to review and discuss the written updates. This will facilitate informed discussions and enable the DSAP to identify any areas requiring further attention or support.

4.19 Ensuring consistent and focused safeguarding oversight is crucial. The Cathedral's participation in the DSAP is valuable, but to ensure its needs are fully met and it is not simply an 'add-on,' the DSAP Chair should work closely with Cathedral safeguarding representatives. To achieve this, the Cathedral and the DSAP need to establish how any reconfiguration of the Safeguarding Management Group (SMG), and any subcommittees formed from it, complement the activities of the DSAP and vice versa.

4.20 This collaboration will ensure that safeguarding oversight at the Cathedral is comprehensive, well-coordinated, and effectively addresses the specific needs and context of the Cathedral community. Until this is complete, the DSAP should have a formal reporting and accountability structure that includes the Cathedral.

Recommendation D11: To enhance Safeguarding Collaboration between the DBF and Cathedral, the following options should be collectively considered:

- a) Ensure that the DBF and Cathedral have aligned safeguarding policies, procedures, and practice standards to create a consistent approach.
- b) Organise joint safeguarding training and development opportunities for staff, volunteers, and leaders across the DBF, Cathedral and Diocese as a whole to build a shared understanding and culture.
- c) Explore ways to ensure the DSAP Chair has a voice in Cathedral safeguarding matters, such as through representation on the Cathedral Chapter or SMG.

4.21 The DSAP currently operates as advisory, on the basis of its influence, rather than delivering scrutiny on the basis of its authority. This is a national issue, as is a uniform approach to remuneration of DSAP chairs. Both issues will be addressed by the Audit at a national level.

Clergy Files - Blue Files

4.22 Clergy files are efficiently administered and secured within the current framework by the Bishop's Office. The Audit identified good practice in the office's approach to ensuring content is easily identifiable, duplicate documents are removed, and access is recorded. However, incoming clergy files are not currently examined by the DSA/O. To strengthen the process, the audit recommends that:

Recommendation D12: Incoming files should be subject to a formal review by the DSA/O. This will provide verification of the CCSL statement and ensure those providing safeguarding support to new appointments are aware of their relevant experience, any areas of development, or potential vulnerabilities.

4.23 An examination of a sample of clergy files evidenced authoritative and persistent practice by the current DSA/O and effective oversight and leadership support by the Bishop's Chaplain. However, the system relies on other Dioceses forwarding clergy files following an appointment. This can cause delays, as illustrated by a case where a file remained outstanding for nine months after a member of clergy arrived, despite the Bishop's Chaplain's repeated attempts to obtain it.

Recommendation D13: To ensure the timely receipt of clergy files, a robust follow-up system should be implemented. This system should include escalating prompts to the Diocese that has not yet forwarded the file. If the file remains outstanding, a letter should be sent from the Diocesan Bishop to the Bishop of the previous Diocese to establish the reason for the delay and to request immediate action. This will help to ensure that crucial safeguarding information is received promptly and that any potential risks are identified and addressed without delay.

DST

- 4.24 The Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST) is well-led by an individual with appropriate operational experience. They are an asset to the Diocese, possessing a good range of complementary skills and working effectively within the limits of their current capacity.
- 4.25 The team has established good working relationships with internal and external agencies, notably the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), who has expressed confidence in their competence. Their proactive approach is further demonstrated by their participation in the completion of a Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) self-assessment audit.
- 4.26 However, despite the team's strengths, the Audit concluded that they currently lack the capacity to manage long-term extraction, critical incidents, or significant diversion of resources. This presents a potential vulnerability in the DBF's safeguarding response.

Capacity

- 4.27 Whilst the DST demonstrates exemplary dedication and commitment, their current capacity presents a significant challenge. The team's willingness to go above and beyond is commendable, but ultimately unsustainable.
- 4.28 The proposed 0.5 FTE post for additional casework capacity is welcomed but considered insufficient. The Audit therefore makes the following recommendations to strengthen the DST.

Recommendation D14: The DBF should appoint a full-time addition to the DST, preferably someone with a social care background, as this will further enhance the team's skillset.

Recommendation D15: The DBF should formalise the deputy role, currently filled by the Safeguarding Advocate, ensuring clear terms of reference and dedicated time allocation. Measures should be implemented by the DBF to prevent conflicts of interest between advocacy and case management responsibilities. This might involve separating these functions or providing clear guidance and supervision.

Recommendation D16: The DBF should consolidate the current administrative support by creating a dedicated Safeguarding Support Officer role within the DST. This role should have specific responsibilities for:

- a) Further development and rollout of Dashboards.
- b) Performance analysis.
- c) Training evaluations.
- d) Call filtering/management.

Recommendation D17: The DBF should optimise training provision by releasing the Training Coordinator from administrative tasks. This will enable them to adopt a more strategic approach to training and awareness-raising, such as developing each DST member to deliver specific aspects of training that will further enhance relationships and networks between the DST and parishes.

4.29 Whilst the Cathedral has stated its capacity is met, the Audit does not agree. Additional resilience, continuity of approach and enhanced supervision can be achieved by consolidating the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer (CSO) within the DST. This will not affect the CSO's primary function in the Cathedral, but will mean that they are professionally supervised, supported and line managed by the DSA/O.

Recommendation D18: The current CSO should be fully embedded as part of the DST. This will deliver a consolidated resource, a uniform approach to safeguarding policy and practice and the ability to flex when additional support is required.

4.30 The Audit welcomes the intention to develop the DSA/O's role with the ambition of creating a pathway to a Strategic Director of Safeguarding position. To this end, work should be undertaken to identify opportunities for development and mentoring beyond the DSA/O's current academic endeavours.

4.31 In the longer term (beyond this Audit period), the incorporation of such a strategic role will also require further resource in the shape of an operations manager i.e., replacement DSA/O.

4.32 To effectively develop a DSA/O into a future Director of Safeguarding, the Audit makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation D19: Mentoring:

- a) Assign a mentor with extensive experience in safeguarding leadership, ideally a current or former Director of Safeguarding from another Diocese or a related field. The current DSAP chair would be an ideal candidate.
- b) Define clear objectives for the mentoring relationship, focusing on the specific skills and knowledge required for a Strategic Directors role.
- c) Schedule regular meetings between the mentor and mentee, providing a safe space for discussion, reflection, and feedback.
- d) Facilitate opportunities for the DSA/O to observe their mentor in action, attending meetings, and participating in strategic planning activities.

Recommendation D20: Development Opportunities:

- a) Provide access to leadership training courses focusing on strategic thinking, decision-making, change management, and team leadership.
- b) Support attendance at national safeguarding conferences and workshops to stay abreast of best practice and network with other professionals.
- c) Arrange secondments or shadowing opportunities with other safeguarding leaders in different organisations, such as local authorities or charities.
- d) Assign the DSA/O to lead specific safeguarding projects to develop their project management skills and experience.

Recommendation D21: Ongoing Support and Review:

- a) Provide regular supervision sessions with the Regional NST representative to discuss progress, challenges, and areas for development.
- b) Conduct regular performance reviews to assess progress against objectives and identify further development needs.
- c) Collaboratively create a development plan with the DSA/O, outlining specific goals, timelines, and resources.

5 Prevention

- 5.1 The DBF recognises the importance of safer recruitment across the Diocese and follows the House of Bishop's guidance - *Safer Recruitment and People Management*. Strengths observed by the Audit included appropriate reference gathering, vetting checks and the provision of DBS eligibility guidance to support parishes. There are secure arrangements in place to identify and assess DBS returns that include relevant information on previous convictions, cautions or disclosable soft intelligence. This is good practice.
- 5.2 To further enhance its safer recruitment practice, the DBF could amend the language used in its job advertisements, application forms, and job descriptions. For instance, incorporating a statement about the DBF's commitment to safeguarding will help to emphasise its focus within the Church and act as a deterrent for unsuitable candidates.

Recommendation D22: The DBF should ensure that its commitment to safeguarding is embedded in all job adverts, application forms and job descriptions.

- 5.3 At parish level, appointments are overseen by the local Parochial Church Council (PCC), with the DBF providing a range of support to ensure recruitment in this context is safe and secure. Training for the administration of DBS checks is also provided through the national e-learning portal. This is good practice.
- 5.4 The DBF oversees and tests the sufficiency of safer recruitment practice within parishes via the Safeguarding Dashboards and the Safeguarding Hubs. The DBF provides support for these tools through the provision of information within PSO induction material, the PSO Handbook and via direct links to dashboard support hosted by the developer.

5.5 The Audit heard from PSOs about the positive impact that the Parish Dashboard has on their practice, with one commenting, “[the] *Dashboard is a helpful tool in monitoring and ensuring compliance.*” That said, not everyone reflected positively on their confidence in managing these systems. PSOs can face workload pressures, so it's essential to provide them support in a manner that makes access as easy as possible.

Recommendation D23: The DBF should ensure they review the challenges and barriers that PSOs face when administrating the Dashboards and Hubs, and provide resources and materials specific to their needs to help them effectively fulfil their role. This may include, for example, easier access to video explainers, FAQs or ‘How to’ guides.

5.6 The Audit also found limited formal processes in place to monitor and report on the trends and data available through the Parish Dashboard. In this context, and with a focus on improving the quality assurance of dashboard data, the Audit makes the following recommendation.

Recommendation D24: In order to assure itself of the quality and impact of Parish Dashboard data, the DBF should define and adopt a Parish Dashboard quality assurance process. While it should be built on the principle of ‘working with’ rather than ‘doing to’, it should involve dip sampling to test the veracity of Parish Dashboard data.

5.7 Safeguarding was recognised as a priority across all levels within the DBF and is routinely considered at key forums. The DSA/O attends various meetings where safeguarding is a standing agenda item, including Bishop's Staff meetings, Bishop's Council meetings, and Diocesan Synod meetings. Furthermore, the DSA/O has a dedicated monthly meeting with the Diocesan Bishop solely focused on safeguarding matters.

5.8 The DSA/O told the Audit that monthly meetings take place with Archdeacons to ensure regular communication and collaboration. In the opinion of the Audit, these meetings could be strengthened by the adoption of a fixed agenda and records of minutes and agreed actions.

Recommendation D25: Routine and frequent meetings should always have an agenda and a record of the minutes and actions agreed. This is a critical process to facilitate the tracking of actions.

5.9 The DST actively engages with various groups. For example, they are present at full staff meetings, attend Deanery Synods and offer training to local leaders on safeguarding standards and the implementation of the Safeguarding Review and Management Plan (SRMP).

5.10 At parish level, the DBF actively promotes safeguarding awareness. Each year, Safeguarding Sunday is encouraged, with clergy and local leaders engaging in discussions about safeguarding with their congregations. To further support these efforts, the DBF provides churches with posters and resources, equipping them to effectively communicate and uphold good practice.

5.11 The Audit recognises the value of the range of face-to-face training available for church officers. To further enhance these initiatives, the Audit recommends facilitating in-person meetings with PSOs. This would provide additional benefits such as strengthening relationships, building capacity, and sharing good practice.

Recommendation D26: The DBF should facilitate regular face-to-face sessions and/or networking events for PSOs to learn and share good practice.

- 5.12 Other mechanisms used to develop, adopt and share good practice were observed by the Audit. These included a recently established East Midlands Regional Network, which meets quarterly to share knowledge and best practices (the DSO/A told the Audit it was set up by them); Deanery Synods, which promote safeguarding within local church communities; and the DBF actively engaging with statutory agencies such as the LSCP. The DBF's participation in the LSCP Operational Delivery Group and Voluntary Sector Working Group ensures alignment with broader safeguarding efforts. Additionally, Local Mission Partnerships (LMP)³ foster collaboration and learning by bringing together churches and organisations to develop innovative safeguarding approaches.
- 5.13 The Audit acknowledges the critical importance of effective communication in safeguarding, recognising that individuals require information at various stages, in diverse formats, and across different locations.
- 5.14 The majority of respondents to the Audit's survey in parishes indicated that they had observed improvements in how safeguarding was being promoted. The DBF utilises a variety of materials and methods to promote safeguarding with different audiences. Clear contact details and service descriptions are provided on the Diocesan website, ensuring individuals can easily access the appropriate support. Publicly available material on the Diocesan website also offers dedicated resources for children and young people, ensuring they have access to age-appropriate information and support. Furthermore, a 'Safeguarding Bulletin' newsletter disseminates vital information and updates to key parish personnel including clergy, churchwardens, and PCC secretaries. As an example, the September 2024 bulletin provided a link to new guidelines for children and youth ministry in personal homes and highlighted 'County Lines' as a safeguarding topic of interest.

³ <https://www.lincoln.anglican.org/about/structure/local-mission-partnerships/>

5.15 Access is provided through the Diocesan website to the national CofE Safeguarding Templates and Resources. That said, the Audit found that awareness of these resources in parishes was low. Indeed, the Audit believes that some useful information is difficult to access on the website, with not all useful and relevant material being collated within the ‘Safeguarding Resources’⁴ section.

Recommendation D27: To ensure resources are readily available and widely used, the DBF should review and update the Safeguarding Resources section of its website. This section should facilitate access to all relevant local and national safeguarding materials, with it being routinely promoted through the DBF’s communication channels, induction and training.

5.16 Notices promoting awareness of various forms of abuse have been prominently displayed within the DBF’s offices. In addition, Deanery Synods have facilitated the dissemination of information concerning the recognition of abuse, as well as reporting pathways. The Audit identified evidence of safeguarding themes being incorporated into social media activity. This included a post featuring a video message offering support to those caring for babies who cry excessively. Additionally, the DBF promoted the Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Partnership and LSAB workshop for businesses, highlighting the importance of adult safeguarding in the workplace.

Recommendation D28: The DBF should adjust its communication plan to include key safeguarding messages via its digital channels. In order to enhance this engagement, it should:

- a) Tailor content to resonate with the specific interests and preferences of followers on each platform.
- b) Employ diverse communication strategies suited to each platform's unique features and user expectations.

⁴ <https://www.lincoln.anglican.org/parish-support/safeguarding/helpful-resources/>

c) Capitalise on relevant awareness days, campaigns, and events to amplify key messages and expand audience engagement.

5.17 The Diocesan Children, Youth and Family (CYF) Enabler maintains a Youth & Families Padlet Board⁵ to facilitate the collation and dissemination of resources, ideas, and activities, as well as to provide signposting to external organisations. This platform includes safeguarding-related materials, such as access to the '*Raise your Roar with Roarry*' campaign, risk assessment templates, and Childline posters.

5.18 As with all good communication, this needs to be a two-way process and actively engaging children, young people and vulnerable adults is an important part of successful prevention planning and implementation. The DBF acknowledges that efforts to hear the voices of children and young people have been limited and the Audit supports its intention to do more in this respect.

Recommendation D29: The DBF should undertake a review to map the types of activities involving children and young people that are taking place within parishes, what the focus of such activities are and to identify any aspects of good practice and/or potential gaps.

Recommendation D30: Further to reviewing existing practice, the DBF should consider implementing new and / or extended models for youth participation in consultation with parishes and its existing networks.

5.19 The Audit team reviewed the material provided by the Diocesan CYF Enabler to those working with children and young people throughout the Diocese. These resources aim to equip individuals with the skills and knowledge to facilitate effective conversations about

⁵ A Padlet board is a virtual bulletin board that allows users to create and share online boards for displaying information. The DBF CYF Padlet board can be accessed here: <https://padlet.com/DioceseofLincolnCFY>

safeguarding with children and young people. The Audit view this material as both focused and helpful.

- 5.20 The effectiveness of the DBF's practice in hearing the specific voices of victims / survivors of abuse and how it learns from their experiences, is set out in the *Victims and Survivors* section of this report.
- 5.21 In line with national policy, the DBF commissions independent risk assessments whenever an allegation or concern is raised against clergy. These assessments are commissioned by the Diocesan Bishop in consultation with the DSA/O. Over the past 12 months, nine internal and one independent risk assessments were undertaken.
- 5.22 The Safeguarding Handbook offers guidance for church officers visiting vulnerable adults at home. That said, the Audit learned that Deanery Synods are discussing how to meet the National Safeguarding Standard for lone working within parishes. The Audit supports this initiative and suggests incorporating existing resources like the Parish Safeguarding Handbook to avoid a duplication of work.

Recommendation D31: When developing and delivering guidance on lone working, the DBF should review existing national materials and incorporate relevant resources into their plans.

- 5.23 The Audit saw evidence of discussion and reflection regarding appropriate 'professional / personal' boundaries. This focus is referenced within several key documents and initiatives, including the Code of Conduct for Readers, Authorised Lay Ministers and other Church Workers, the Code of Conduct for Diocesan Trustees, and Clergy Reflective Practice Groups. This is good practice.

6 Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk

- 6.1 The DBF has measures in place to identify, assess, and manage risk effectively across the Diocese. This includes a skilled and diverse DST, the implementation of the National Safeguarding Case Management System (NSCMS), and comprehensive safeguarding policies, training programmes, and recruitment procedures. Clear reporting routes have been established, and the overall arrangements help to promote early identification of risks, collaborative decision-making, assessment, and timely intervention.
- 6.2 The Audit examined the DBF's Risk Register which includes key corporate issues and those associated with safeguarding. Oversight of this register is embedded within the DBF's key accountability structures, including Bishop's Council, the DSAP, and Diocesan Synod. At the time of the Audit, the Risk Register was alive to recent and relevant events and included a focus on the broader national context in which the DBF and the Diocese as a whole operates.
- 6.3 The DST operates on a low-threshold model of practice. This promotes a culture that encourages reporting and dialogue with the DST when someone has concerns. This is good practice. Defined processes are in place for receiving and triaging new concerns, assessing risk, and allocating cases.
- 6.4 For those cases referred to the DST, outcomes typically involve one or more of the following:
- Onward referrals to statutory authorities
 - The management of individuals within the worshipping community
 - The provision/signposting to support
 - The initiation of disciplinary processes, such as Clergy Disciplinary Measures (CDM)
 - Initiation of the Safeguarding Case Management procedure (formerly Core Groups)

- 6.5 There is good awareness about how and to whom concerns can be reported, supported by website signposting, published email addresses, and a central phone number. Phone call enquiries are aided by a central phone system to route calls to available team members. The DSA/O retains oversight and knowledge of all cases.
- 6.6 The Audit received feedback from the DST that some people can use safeguarding channels for non-safeguarding issues because they believe this is the best way to get a rapid response. While positive that people are seeking help, this places unnecessary pressure on the DST. Whilst some of the issues are addressed in the Culture, Leadership and Capacity section of this report, there would also be merit in the DST creating a defined 'threshold document'. Typically used in the 'front-door' arrangements of Children's Social Care, such a threshold tool could help to emphasise the types of concerns that are within the DST's remit. This could help to promote a better understanding of what the DST deals with across the Diocese and prevent some of the contacts that it receives that are relevant for other teams. While the 2024 Annual Report recommended that the NST develop a national threshold document, the DSO could develop a local version as an interim measure.

Recommendation D32: Despite the 2024 Independent Safeguarding Audits Annual Report recommending that the NST develop a national template for a threshold document, the DST should explore the feasibility of implementing its own defined local threshold document. This document should clearly specify the types of cases and concerns for which the DST is responsible. If developed, it should be promoted throughout the Diocese and include appropriate signposting for cases that fall below the DST's threshold for response.

- 6.7 It is positive that the Audit's survey across the Diocese found that the vast majority of respondents are aware of who the safeguarding leads are within their setting and how to report a safeguarding concern.

- 6.8 The national safeguarding case management system (MyConcern) is a centralised and secure database, allowing for safeguarding concerns to be reported and recorded. There is also a facility to attach relevant case reports, quickly retrieve referrals to external agencies and record correspondence and documentation in one place. The Audit saw evidence that the DST has taken the time to develop their knowledge and understanding of the system's functionality and use the system effectively.
- 6.9 With regards to the core processes engaged by the DST, the Audit saw evidence of good practice. This included a multi-agency approach with statutory agencies, the convening of safeguarding case management groups (formerly referred to as Core Groups), risk assessments, support for persons of concern and consideration of wider issues such as co-ordination with other Dioceses.
- 6.10 At the time of the Audit, there were 200 open cases recorded on MyConcern. Of the open cases, 178 were not allocated to a named individual on the *Concerns Dashboard*, but to an 'owning group', namely the DST. The absence of an identified worker on this dashboard has the potential to blur lines of accountability and responsibility for case management. Whilst entries in the chronology section appeared to indicate a case owner, the system setting should reflect this. This will also allow for more effective monitoring of workloads allocated to DST members.

Recommendation D33: The MyConcern CMS dashboard should reflect a specific case owner for each open case as opposed the generic 'owning group.'

- 6.11 The DST makes good use of the risk grading function on MyConcern. Cases are allocated a risk level of 'high', 'medium' or 'low'. At the time of the Audit, one concern was marked as 'medium' risk and 199 concerns marked as 'low' risk. This could be strengthened by

detailed recording of the rationale for the risk grading and prioritisation of cases, alongside clear timescales for actions and the review of these.

Recommendation D34: As part of the triage process, the DSA/O should record the rationale for risk grading and the prioritisation of cases, alongside specifying timescales for action and any review of progress.

6.12 There is room for improvement both in terms of the national system itself and the application of its functionality. For example, (as highlighted in other Audit reports) some of the system's terminology is outdated referring to 'historic' concerns and there are no simple mechanisms to identify concerns where Core Groups have been convened, where referrals have been made to the DBF by external organisations or the ability to view all current active Safety Plans.

6.13 Risk assessments conducted by the DST are initiated in response to concerns involving church officers, members of the religious community, or individuals from specific high-risk categories seeking participation in Church events or services. These assessments adhere to national directives and prioritise the safety of victims, potential victims, and vulnerable individuals.

6.14 The Audit found evidence of the effective use of Safety Plans (known locally as Safer Church Agreements (SCA)) to manage risks posed by convicted offenders and others who present a risk within the Cathedral or local parish settings. At the time of the Audit, nine active Safety Plans were in place, although this number does not fully capture the extensive time invested in the safety planning processes undertaken with respondents.

6.15 The Safety Plans examined by the Audit set prohibitions and standards regarding expected behaviours, they were well defined, proportionate and authorised appropriately. There was

evidence of a multi-agency approach with statutory agencies. Alongside mitigating the risk derived from an individual, the safety and welfare of those posing the risk was also properly considered.

6.16 It was noted that arrangements did not always take account of the fact that some respondents were likely to visit other churches or other Church-related settings. The following recommendation is made in this regard.

6.17 Safety Plans recorded review dates and contained the names of all relevant stakeholders including the respondent. However, the Audit noted that several had not been signed by all stakeholders.

Recommendation D35: All existing Safety Plans should:

- a) Be reviewed to ensure that they include a clause that encompasses contact with Church attendees outside of the Church setting and attendance at other churches / associated Church settings.
- b) Be signed by all relevant parties and action taken to ensure they are understood by the respondent.

6.18 Safety Plans are regularly reviewed by the DST, in collaboration with the parish incumbent and relevant statutory agencies. The Audit saw evidence of temporary local management plans being used in the interim period whilst a full risk assessment was being completed. This is good practice.

6.19 However, the Audit also found that reviews of some Safety Plans are not always completed on time. Whilst it is acknowledged that there may be circumstances that affect the status of a Safety Plan, the Audit believes that such information should be recorded within the case management system. Furthermore, the Audit found an instance where an individual's

record on the case management system did not have the corresponding Safety Plan file attached.

Recommendation D36: The DST should review active Safety Plans to ensure that all associated files and records are updated on the case management system.

6.20 In one instance, the Audit found that not everyone within a particular parish (involved in supporting a respondent on a Safety Plan) fully understood or could independently apply the stated prohibitions. In this instance, it is positive that the parish sought advice from the DST.

Recommendation D37: The DBF should provide training to all parishes on risk assessments and the development of effective strategies to manage any identified risk through Safety Plans.

6.21 The Audit met with an individual subject to a Safety Plan and a parish priest. This individual had been convicted of a child-related offence and sentenced to imprisonment. The incumbent spoke positively about the Safety Plan and described the support received from the DST as 'excellent'.

6.22 The individual subject to the Safety Plan spoke about feeling supported within the Church community and the benefits of having honest and open conversations with those involved in their plan. They demonstrated a clear understanding of the plan's conditions and openly acknowledged the associated risks.

6.23 It is encouraging that the DBF has previously provided training on working with people who have caused sexual harm. This training has been available to PSOs and other church officers who work with individuals subject to a Safety Plan. That said, the Audit recommends further, more specialised training for those who work directly with this cohort

of offenders. The need for tailored, local training is addressed in more detail in the *Learning, Supervision and Support* section of this report.

- 6.24 The Audit saw convincing evidence of the effective use of Safeguarding Case Management Groups (SCMGs) in managing complex cases involving church officers. The current arrangements reflect good practice, with meetings being chaired by the Bishop's Chaplain. The meetings follow a structured agenda which promotes effective collaboration, scrutiny and information gathering.
- 6.25 Overall, the Audit saw examples of good record keeping and proactivity in information sharing with statutory partners. Minutes of Core Group meetings evidenced an assessment of risks, consideration of victim / survivors, support for the respondent and challenging and clear decision making.
- 6.26 The DBF is a registered charity with a statutory requirement to submit Serious Incident Reports (SIRs) to the Charity Commission. Support and practice guidance is available at a national level regarding SIR referrals. The Audit was informed that these SIRs have been shared with the NST and that one case had met the threshold for a SIR in the last 12 months. Good practice was observed in the form of timely reports, updates to the Charity Commission and a multi-agency approach to concerns. The referral to the Charity Commission aligned with national guidance and the NST was informed.
- 6.27 The DBF has several national information sharing agreements (ISAs) in place. The Audit noted one following the national data sharing agreement with the Police, alongside a local agreement with Lincolnshire Police. This could potentially duplicate and/or confuse which agreement has precedence and as such, the following recommendation is made.

Recommendation D38: The DBF should review whether two separate ISA's with the police are required.

6.28 The Audit was informed there is no defined process within the DBF to escalate concerns about differences of opinion on safeguarding judgements. To promote a culture of curiosity and challenge, this should be urgently addressed.

Recommendation D39: The DBF should implement clear procedures for escalating differences of opinion regarding case management decisions.

6.29 That said, disagreements between the DBF and Cathedral are outlined within their Memorandum of Understanding.

6.30 The DSA/O receives supervision sessions every six weeks with the NST regional lead. These sessions are recorded, and the DSA/O keeps notes from the meetings. Previously, both the DSA/O and the NST regional lead suggested cases for discussion during supervision. However, at the time of the Audit, a new NST regional lead had recently been appointed, and formal supervision had not yet commenced. As highlighted in other Audits, strengthening the quality assurance function as part of this supervision process would yield benefits. For example, whilst selecting cases for discussion should remain, the NST regional lead should also dip sample a number of cases, including those which did not meet the threshold. This would ensure a more systematic approach to assessing judgement and the quality of practice.

6.31 The DSA/O provides line management and support to the Safeguarding Team through formal supervision. This takes place every six weeks and follows an agreed structure, with sessions conducted in person. They are currently transitioning to the '4x4x4' supervision

model to provide a more structured framework for the DSA/O. Detailed notes are taken during each session, recorded on a pro forma, and sent to the relevant team member for their agreement.

- 6.32 The storage of personal information held by the DST on the NSCMS is compliant with UK data protection legislation and the UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR). The Diocese achieved a Cyber Essentials accreditation in 2024. Indeed, the DBF recognises the importance of compliance with data protection legislation and practice and is monitoring this as a risk within its Risk Register.
- 6.33 The approach to data protection is strengthened by the inclusion of UK GDPR for all DBF staff during induction and at the parish level, with information available through the Safeguarding Handbook. Findings from the Audit's DBF and parish workforce surveys indicated most respondents were aware of the Diocesan's privacy notice in respect of data protection.
- 6.34 The approach to data protection is positive and further strengthened by the Memorandum of Understanding in place between the DBF and the Cathedral, setting out clear parameters governing the legal and best practice requirements for information sharing. That said, the current agreement needs to be reviewed and updated. This is covered elsewhere in this report.

7 Victims and Survivors

7.1 For many victims and survivors, living with abuse they have endured can be a profoundly traumatic experience. It may be the case for many that they do not report abuse at the time at which it took place. This could be for a variety of reasons, such as fear of not being believed, shame, a lack of awareness, or a fear of reprisal.⁶ Victims and survivors may also feel overwhelmed by the process itself, with the potential of re-traumatisation through recounting their experiences, or anxieties about the outcome of disclosure.⁷ Church bodies should take care to create and nurture an environment that enables victims and survivors to feel heard, supported and protected, whilst also learning from their voices to improve safeguarding practice.

7.2 The Audit obtained feedback from victims and survivors through an anonymous online survey. The results and findings presented a mixed picture, highlighting both positive and negative aspects of practice, with some areas showing greater consensus than others. The Audit was able to conduct 1-1 discussions with victims and survivors and listen to their individual experiences.

7.3 The DBF follows the House of Bishop's 'Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse' guidance and outlines its commitment to this on the Diocesan website. Whilst this is positive, not all respondents to the Audit's survey indicated that they were aware of this guidance prior to reporting abuse and there was uncertainty about whether having the guidance in place at the time of reporting their abuse would have made a difference.

⁶ <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2013/no-one-noticed-no-one-heard>

⁷ <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual/responding-victims-and-survivors-abuse/section-1-responding-well>

7.4 The DBF demonstrates its commitment to supporting adult survivors of abuse through a dedicated and experienced Safeguarding Advocate (a qualified Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocate). They provide practical and emotional support to victims and survivors of both recent and non-recent abuse. The Audit has seen and heard evidence of positive engagement between victims and survivors and the Safeguarding Advocate. This included appropriate guidance and signposting, taking a trauma-informed and person-centred approach and ensuring appropriate follow up. Positive feedback was also provided regarding engagement with the DSA/O.

7.5 Whilst the Audit observed the DBF's commitment to survivor engagement, it also identified that not all victims / survivors have the same experiences. Feedback gathered through individual engagements and an anonymous survey highlighted concerns regarding timeliness and consistency of communication. In one case, the Audit heard that this could have been due to capacity, confidentiality and a lack of appropriate succession planning. To mitigate such anxieties, the Audit emphasises the importance of transparency, timeliness and managing expectations when communicating with victims and survivors. Each victim and survivor requires individualised support and it is crucial to establish clear communication and a personalised plan for every individual. This approach should help manage expectations and ensure tailored support throughout their journey. The Audit makes the following recommendations.

Recommendation D40: The DBF should maintain consistent communication with victims and survivors, establishing agreed-upon check-in points and following up accordingly. Even if there are no new updates, the DBF should still communicate this to manage expectations and avoid overpromising. The frequency and method of communication should be determined in advance with the individuals involved, respecting their wishes.

Recommendation D41: The DBF should have appropriate succession planning in place to ensure contact with victims and survivors remains consistent. They could do this by:

- a) Continuing to maintain records appropriately.
- b) Ensuring there is a handover procedure in the instance of sickness, leave or absences in post.
- c) Informing the victim and survivor that there will be changes to their care.

7.6 The difficulty of engaging across Diocesan and local authority boundaries is a theme that has echoed across other Audits and has been reflected by many victims / survivors. It has been stated that this frustration is mainly attributed to a lack of persistent and consistent communication to resolve issues of support. The Audit will address this within the Annual Report. In the meantime, the following recommendation is made:

Recommendation D42: To improve the handling of complex safeguarding cases that involve multiple agencies or jurisdictions, e.g., other dioceses, a dedicated Lead Safeguarding Liaison Officer should be appointed. This individual, agreed upon by the victim / survivor and all safeguarding representatives, will act as a central point of contact to ensure consistent communication and coordinated support.

7.7 The current Survivor Strategy forms part of the Diocese's overarching Safeguarding Strategy (2023-26). It contains acknowledgement that inadequate responses to abuse can exacerbate trauma experienced by victims and survivors. From a leadership perspective, there is a desire to learn from victims and survivors to improve safeguarding practices. The DBF actively encourages survivor participation within the DSAP, evidenced through the promotion of this opportunity on the Diocesan website and welcoming individuals to join at a comfortable stage in their healing journey. This is good practice.

7.8 The DBF is also working towards enhancing its Survivor Strategy by establishing a survivor-led focus group. The Audit supports this commitment to collaboration and co-production, noting the opportunity's promotion on the Diocesan website as good practice. Whilst the DBF is taking positive steps, survey responses indicate a need for clearer communication and a stronger demonstration of the DBF's commitment to improving practice and actively seeking input from victims and survivors. To help maximise participation, the following recommendation is made.

Recommendation D43: To enhance the reach and impact of survivor engagement initiatives, the DBF should:

- a) Utilise existing channels such as parish newsletters, websites, social media platforms, and announcements during services to share information.
- b) Create materials such as posters for parish distribution, explaining the purpose of the focus group and how to participate.
- c) Equip local church officers to promote and communicate these opportunities and be able to answer any questions parishioners may have.

7.9 The Diocesan Safeguarding Communication Plan for 2024 prioritises compassionate communication with victims and survivors. It envisions a "neighbourly" approach, using sensitive language, relatable imagery, and easily accessible digital formats. This is a welcome approach and to strengthen such practice, the Audit makes the following recommendation.

Recommendation D44: The DBF should use enhanced communication methods to clearly outline the support and resources available for victims and survivors. This could include, for example, explainer videos on the Victim and Survivor webpage to make information even more accessible and engaging.

7.10 The Audit recognises that, for a range of factors, it can be challenging for victims and survivors to provide feedback to organisations to improve practice. In this respect, the Audit believes that establishing Diocese-wide listening events could help facilitate mutual benefits in ensuring learning is being sought from a diverse group of victims and survivors. This collaboration could include co-production of safeguarding materials, discussing effectiveness of support and gathering other valuable insights.

Recommendation D45: The DBF should establish a formal mechanism for ongoing engagement with victims and survivors of abuse. This could include listening events throughout the Diocese and events could also be facilitated at Lincoln Cathedral.

7.11 The Audit acknowledges the DBF's efforts in offering and facilitating apologies between victims / survivors and meetings with the Safeguarding Team and senior church leaders. While the Audit noted frustrations in relation to procedural aspects of the Interim Support Scheme (beyond the control of an individual DBF), it also received positive feedback in respect of the DST's assistance in helping victims and survivors access the scheme. The Safeguarding Advocate was particularly commended for providing valuable support throughout this process. The Audit received negative feedback in relation to the interim support application form. Concerns centre on the lack of a trauma-informed approach, by requiring that individuals repeatedly recount their experiences, potentially causing further harm. This is particularly problematic as the interim support is being used in place of a fully developed Redress Scheme. This issue is covered in the 2024 Annual Report.

7.12 Contact information for the DST can be found on the Diocesan website, together with details of the relevant local authorities who handle concerns outside of the team's working hours. Survivor and Victim Support services also feature on the safeguarding webpage

and hyperlinks are provided to various support services, the National Redress Scheme, and a variety of resources tailored to specific groups, including children, vulnerable adults, and individuals experiencing mental health concerns or homelessness. The signposting button for 'Further support resources'⁸ is comprehensive, and attempts have been made to categorise these materials. However, key information is currently contained within a PDF document.⁹ To improve accessibility and user experience, the Audit recommends the following.

Recommendation D46: The DBF should prioritise moving the information on 'further support resources' currently contained in a PDF directly onto the webpage.

To better understand the needs of victims and survivors using the website, the Diocese should analyse user journeys and website traffic data. This analysis will inform how the webpages should be restructured to provide a more user-friendly and supportive experience.

7.13 It is positive that the DBF provides a wide range of signposting. However, given the most common safeguarding themes are domestic and sexual abuse within the Diocese, the Audit believes these should feature more prominently on the Diocesan website. Further, the DBF should also consider signposting to 'Broken Rites', an interdenominational support group for divorced and separated spouses and partners of clergy and recognised ministers.

⁸ <https://www.lincoln.anglican.org/parish-support/safeguarding/helpful-resources/>

⁹ PDFs on websites can be unfavourable on websites as they disrupt the user experience by requiring downloads, lacking interactive features, and often hindering accessibility compared to native web content.

Recommendation D47: To enhance the visibility and accessibility of support resources for domestic and sexual abuse survivors, the DBF should:

1. Ensure that contact information for support services related to domestic and sexual abuse are prominently displayed on the Diocesan website's homepage and other relevant sections.
2. Signpost to 'Broken Rites' as an additional support resource for divorced and separated spouses and partners of clergy and recognised ministers.

7.14 The Diocesan website has recently been updated to reflect current safeguarding developments. This is good practice. Furthermore, the Audit received assurances that the Diocese will integrate learning from national developments into future action plans and the Diocesan Safeguarding Strategy, ensuring ongoing learning and improvement regarding Victim and Survivor provision.

8 Learning, Supervision and Support

- 8.1 Underpinned by its clear commitment to improving the culture of safeguarding, the DBF has made good progress on the delivery of safeguarding learning across the Diocese. Activity aligns with the expectations set out in the CofE's Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework and the DBF's draft training strategy for 2024-26 is appropriately focused. This strategy outlines a structured approach to safeguarding learning, emphasising a learning journey that promotes behavioural change and strengthens safeguarding culture.
- 8.2 The DBF's arrangements benefit from a dedicated trainer (who has a background in safeguarding and education) and a group of experienced volunteer deanery trainers. Safeguarding training is available in various formats, including in-person sessions, Zoom, and via an online Safeguarding Training Portal. It is also flexible and accessible to meet the needs of clergy, staff, and volunteers with exceptions or adaptations being made for individuals with learning difficulties or for victims/survivors of abuse. The Safeguarding Newsletter advertises sessions and highlights topics of interest, which have recently included online safety, county lines, and cuckooing.
- 8.3 Training records demonstrate strong participation across the various safeguarding modules, with 2,709 courses completed in the past year. Of the records submitted to the Audit, just two individuals were identified as having outstanding training, with appropriate action being taken by the DST to address both situations. The Audit understands that the dedicated trainer is to be given oversight of Authorised Lay Minister (ALM) training and will be responsible for issuing reminders alongside clergy and readers – the Audit support this change.

- 8.4 Whilst training materials are standardised and provided by the NST, reflective feedback is gathered to assess their overall effectiveness and to help identify any potential changes that are within the scope of the DST to make. The DBF maintains a central feedback spreadsheet, and trainers participate in quarterly regional meetings and Deanery Trainer meetings to share best practice and discuss improvements to the training programme. This is good practice.
- 8.5 A recurring theme highlighted during the Audit was the need for context-specific training to address the unique challenges being faced within the Diocese. Indeed, whilst the NST advises against altering its materials, local trainers have adopted an approach of delivering core content that is supplemented by context-specific examples, which focus on themes such as vulnerable adults, dementia support, financial abuse, and mental health. This helps to ensure training remains compliant to national standards, whilst highlighting safeguarding topics that require a greater emphasis locally. This is also good practice.
- 8.6 The Audit also identified the need for training that delves deeper into the understanding of offenders, particularly those who commit sexual offences. Whilst the NST includes this topic within its existing materials, the DBF would benefit from additional, more detailed sessions that enhance knowledge about offender behaviour and risk management. Queries raised by staff with the Audit regarding the ability of individuals on Safety Plans to volunteer within the Church, underscore the importance of this learning.

Recommendation D48: The DBF should introduce theme-specific training modules focused on understanding the behaviour of offenders, particularly sexual predators. These modules should be accessible to relevant Church Officers across the DBF, Cathedral, and parishes. Whilst overall responsibility for this lies with the NST, the DBF should seek to implement interim measures to address this contemporary safeguarding need.

Clergy Support

- 8.7 Clergy are supported through various mechanisms designed to address the emotional and psychological demands of their safeguarding work. The Clergy Wellbeing Officer, pastoral care initiatives, and access to the Bishop's Discretionary Fund provide support when needed. In addition, clergy can benefit from access to Health Assured's 24/7 counselling helpline, which offers specialised support in handling trauma.
- 8.8 Ministerial Development Reviews (MDRs) are now routinely conducted, including a dedicated focus on safeguarding. The MDR process identifies areas for growth and development, providing clergy with an opportunity for self-reflection and accountability. A new MDR handbook emphasises safeguarding responsibilities, provides self-assessment tools, and underscores the importance of wellbeing.
- 8.9 Whilst improvements in how Archdeacons implement the MDR process are evident, inconsistencies remain in how they record relevant safeguarding experience and developmental aspirations. However, as national guidelines on this matter are pending, the Audit makes no specific recommendations at this time.

Supervision and Support of Safeguarding Roles

- 8.10 Those in safeguarding roles are provided with comprehensive induction programmes to equip them with the knowledge and confidence required to perform their responsibilities effectively. Targeted one-to-one meetings are conducted with individuals in key roles and supporting materials, including links to safeguarding training, are made available. For PSOs, there is a dedicated webpage with help videos, an induction pack, and guidance on safeguarding training.
- 8.11 Members of the DST report feeling well-supported, with formal supervision sessions held every six weeks (using the 4x4x4 supervision model) and informal check-ins taking place

frequently. To help ensure access to specialised support for managing the emotional demands of their role, clinical supervision is provided to the Survivor Advocate by a Chartered Clinical Psychologist.

- 8.12 The DBF demonstrates a commitment to continued professional development (CPD) for safeguarding professionals. This includes regular participation in NST trainer days, regional trainer meetings, and access to external training opportunities. Recent CPD opportunities for the DST have included a Spiritual Abuse Course and Prevent training.
- 8.13 The DBF benefits from strong relationships with external safeguarding professionals, including the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) and Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB). The DSO actively participates in the LSCP's Operational Delivery Group meetings, whilst the Safeguarding Advocate contributes as a faith specialist within voluntary sector meetings. At a national level, the DBF is a pathfinder within the Midlands Region and facilitates an East Midlands Network to share best practice.
- 8.14 The Audit notes that whilst the DST's work-life balance is supported through flexible working arrangements, the team could benefit from a more robust and mandatory framework for psychological support.

Recommendation D49: The DBF should consider formalising access to clinical supervision and ensuring consistency in trauma-informed care for all members of the DST.

9 Conclusion

- 9.1 The Audit of Lincoln DBF revealed a Diocese with a positive safeguarding culture. During focus groups, one-to-one discussions, and anonymous surveys, the overwhelming majority of participants reported feeling safe and supported in their places of work and worship. The majority of staff, volunteers, and worshippers described improvements in safeguarding practice, confidence in identifying their safeguarding leads, and a belief that safeguarding is becoming more firmly embedded.
- 9.2 This improved safeguarding position is largely thanks to the dedication of those on the frontline: parish volunteers, the committed but under-resourced DST, and the leadership of the Diocesan Bishop. The Audit found clear evidence of the Bishop's commitment to safeguarding, demonstrated through his collaborative approach, close work with the DSO/A, investment in the DST, and reflection on lessons learnt.
- 9.3 Further strengths include the proactive and experienced Chair of the DSAP and the DBF's governance and oversight structure, where safeguarding is a standing agenda item, and the DSO/A is a permanent attendee. However, the Audit recommends clarifying the purpose of each forum and strengthening administrative processes and record-keeping.
- 9.4 To further enhance safeguarding leadership, greater clarity is needed across senior roles, particularly between Suffragan Bishops and Archdeacons, where the Audit found an unhelpful disconnect. This has led to a lack of structure and inconsistency in some areas of safeguarding practice. For example, engagement at the Deanery and parish levels could benefit from a more consistent framework and structured planning / debriefing with the DST.

- 9.5 This Audit makes a range of recommendations to strengthen safeguarding practice, clarify roles and responsibilities, widen participation in governance and oversight, and reinforce existing good practice.
- 9.6 Addressing the capacity issues within the DST is key. Recommendations in this area, if accepted, will consolidate resources, lay the foundations for an operationally independent Safeguarding Directorate, and support the appointment of a suitably qualified Strategic Director of Safeguarding.
- 9.7 By carefully considering this report and addressing the recommendations, Lincoln DBF can further strengthen its safeguarding framework and enhance the wellbeing of all those within its care.
- 9.8 Finally, please note that reading this brief conclusion does not provide the insight and detail available in the body of the Audit report.

Part Two - Lincoln Cathedral

10 Context

- 10.1 Lincoln Cathedral was founded in 1072 after the Remigius de Fécamo moved the see from Dorchester to Lincoln. Now one of the largest gothic cathedrals in Europe, it began with the rebuilding of the Minster Church of St Mary between 1072 and 1092. The Cathedral has undergone many periods of transformation, with fires, earthquakes and other historical events altering its fabric. Following an earthquake in the 12th century, Bishop Hugh of Avalon oversaw a rebuild. Over the centuries, further additions and alterations were made, including the replacement of the Central Tower in the 14th Century. This made Lincoln Cathedral the tallest building in the world for 238 years.
- 10.2 Lincoln Cathedral is situated within a diverse county, marked by economic disparity. While agriculture remains vital, the service sector and tourism contribute significantly, particularly in Lincoln, which is boosted by its universities. Social deprivation varies across the Diocese. Some urban communities contend with challenges of homelessness and substance abuse, while rural and coastal communities face issues of poverty and climate change. These challenges co-exist with more affluent areas.
- 10.3 Today, the Cathedral upholds a vibrant liturgical tradition with daily services and a strong musical program. It continues to be both a spiritual hub and a cultural landmark. The cathedral church occupies an open precinct in the southeastern quarter of Lincoln's historic uphill area. This precinct encompasses nearly 90 other properties, most of which are listed buildings, adding to the area's rich historical significance. The Song School serves as a rehearsal space for the Cathedral's choristers, who come from 16 local schools, with which the Cathedral has established relationships. The Cathedral has been formally registered as a Charity with the Charity Commission for England and Wales.

10.4 According to the most recent census data, Lincoln has an estimated population of approximately 103,813 residents with a wider urban area of 127,540. The Cathedral receives an average of 2500 visitors weekly, with 149 attending Sunday Sung Eucharist, and between 40-100 at evensong.

11 Progress

- 11.1 The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) audit of the Cathedral was published in December 2021 and resulted in 49 ‘considerations’ for improvement. The Cathedral was also involved in the Diocesan Past Cases Review Process (PCR2) which resulted in four recommendations specifically for the Cathedral itself.
- 11.2 All 49 SCIE considerations were accepted and incorporated into an action plan that was overseen jointly by the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer (CSO) and the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP), with a quarterly progress report to Chapter. Most actions in response to SCIE were met, although some remain subject to ongoing attention. Such areas include the need for a further review of CCTV provision (which is to be included in the Cathedral’s Safeguarding Delivery Plan), assessing the impact of training on safeguarding practice and the embedding of operational leadership.
- 11.3 At the time of PCR2, all four recommendations were addressed. The Audit has seen and heard evidence that the Cathedral has since reviewed these outcomes and is progressing areas which require further attention. This is positive. These areas primarily refer to the oversight of volunteers. Planned actions include increasing capacity to alleviate pressure from the volunteer coordinator and expanding the central register to include the wider volunteer team.
- 11.4 Alongside the DBF, the Cathedral has also been engaged in Section 11 Audits in cooperation with Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) and Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB) (completed in April 2024). Although no formal Lessons Learned Reviews (LLRs) have been conducted for the Cathedral, a comprehensive review of all safeguarding policies, procedures, and their management is currently underway. This

initiative aims to raise awareness and ensure best practice is being followed. Furthermore, the Audit has also seen evidence of subsequent audits being discussed at DSAP. This is reassuring.

12 Culture, Leadership and Capacity

Culture

- 12.1 Most of the Cathedral's workforce and worshipping community who engaged with the Audit were positive about its culture, with the top three words chosen to describe it being, 'welcoming', 'supportive', and 'respectful'. There was similar positivity expressed about the Cathedral's approach and management of safeguarding.
- 12.2 That said, some challenges were also recognised. For example, despite the majority agreeing that they had seen improvements in the Cathedral's overall safeguarding arrangements, nearly a third of the workforce disagreed or were unsure that a safeguarding culture was now embedded. A significant minority used words like 'stressful', 'cliquey', and 'demanding' to describe the culture. This indicates that for at least some, they could have less confidence in expressing their concerns to those in positions of authority.
- 12.3 The new Dean recognises such views and fully accepts that there is still work to do. He also recognises that the Cathedral has faced some significant historic challenges, which have impacted on both morale and culture. Positively, he remains focused on addressing ingrained habits, not least those linked to deference and the hesitancy of some to approach or speak directly to the Dean. For example, since being appointed, he has taken proactive steps to address barriers to better engagement and the Audit saw evidence of this in action. He works from his office within the Cathedral, operates an open-door policy, is both accessible and approachable, is personally involved in pastoral care issues and actively encourages people to address him by his first name.
- 12.4 Notwithstanding the work to be done, the cultural trajectory at the Cathedral is positive. The existing plans to strengthen policies, processes, training, and collaboration will help

to drive and embed further change. To accelerate progress, the Dean should continue to lead by example and seek out opportunities to broaden engagement between the Cathedral's workforce, its congregation, the Diocese and the wider communities within which the Cathedral sits. The Audit found a commitment to work towards a more open, collaborative, and transparent culture, where all staff feel empowered to contribute and work together towards the common goal of safeguarding the Cathedral community.

Recommendation C1: The Cathedral should develop a defined action plan to monitor and support continuous improvement of its safeguarding culture. This could be implemented in overlapping phases.

- a) Implement / enhance monthly all-staff safeguarding briefings / meetings and quarterly cross-departmental manager briefings. Ensure meaningful agendas and targets are set. For example, aim for 80% average attendance and 75% positive feedback on meeting effectiveness (gathered via surveys or feedback forms).
- b) Develop a confidential staff feedback mechanism and set a specific date for its implementation (this is not the same as whistleblowing and should be easy to access either online or via a physical suggestion box or both). As an example, this could be launched three months after the Audit's publication with an accompanying awareness raising programme. Thereafter, the Cathedral could track the number of suggestions received and the time taken to address them. It could analyse feedback, identify themes and target key areas for improvement.
- c) Review and simplify all staff / volunteer policies and procedures within three months of the publication of the Audit. Set a target that 90% of staff find the revised policies clear and accessible (measured via anonymous staff/volunteer surveys).
- d) Engage an independent facilitator by September 2025 to conduct an updated cultural assessment and provide a report outlining evidence of impact, identification of residual issues and recommendations for next steps. The report should be completed by December 2025. Identify and track the implementation of key recommendations from this report via the SMC, with reports on progress to Chapter.
- e) Implement a formal staff recognition programme to publicly acknowledge the contributions of individuals and teams. This could include initiatives such as 'Safeguarding Champion of the month' awards, annual recognition events, or highlighting achievements via internal communications.

12.5 Most of those involved in discussions with the Audit reflected the ongoing efforts to enhance collaboration with others. Indeed, the Cathedral is actively strengthening its relationships and building good collaboration both internally and externally. It was clear that senior leaders recognise the Cathedral's importance within the wider community and the Audit saw evidence of this via positive engagement with local charities, the police, and even the CEO of the local football club.

Leadership

12.6 The Dean is unambiguous in his acceptance of his ultimate accountability and responsibility for safeguarding and the Audit saw and heard evidence of his determination to deliver positive and inclusive change at pace. He demonstrated a detailed understanding of the historic challenges facing the Cathedral and has a good working relationship with the Diocesan Bishop.

12.7 The Dean is supported by a proficient Residentiary Canon who has significant experience in a number of roles, including a period as the interim Dean. He has been involved in safeguarding at the Cathedral for some time, both as a non-executive member and now as a Residentiary Canon. He is the current Cathedral Safeguarding Lead (CSL).

12.8 The Cathedral also benefits from the support of an able Interim Chief Operating Officer (COO). Reassuringly, both the Residentiary Canon and COO were able to demonstrate an understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities, were aware of areas that require strengthening and could signpost to appropriate pathways for support. Given the need for consistent leadership at this time it will be important to move to a permanent COO as soon as possible.

Recommendation C2: To ensure consistent leadership and effective management during this period of transition, the Cathedral should prioritise the appointment of a permanent Chief Operating Officer (COO).

12.9 The Audit acknowledges the recent appointment of a Cathedral Safeguarding Officer (CSO/A), who despite their limited time in role, has already made a positive impact on training and reviewing outdated policies and procedures. Engagement with internal and external partners has already resulted in improved safeguarding approaches. For example, collaborating with the local council to develop a comprehensive guide to support rough sleepers, developing diverse training programs to address specific safeguarding themes, and the implementation of a user-friendly form to guide staff and volunteers in reporting safeguarding concerns.

12.10 From a leadership perspective, the Audit welcomes the Dean's clear vision, the prioritisation of key risks (including staff wellbeing) and the critical need to ensure stability during transition via a committed and effective SLT. To this end, the following recommendation is made:

Recommendation C3: The Dean, Cathedral Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the Chapter Cathedral Safeguarding Lead should collaborate with the Diocesan Bishop, Diocesan Safeguarding Officer/Advisor (DSO/A), and Cathedral Safeguarding Officer/Advisor (CSO/A) to develop a comprehensive safeguarding improvement plan. This plan should:

- a) Clearly articulate the Dean's vision for the Cathedral, including its role in the wider community and its commitment to spiritual growth and service, in the context of safeguarding.
- b) Emphasise the Cathedral's commitment to the wellbeing and inclusion of all clergy, staff and volunteers, fostering a supportive and respectful working environment.
- c) Outline the crucial role of the SLT in providing effective executive direction and operational management, particularly during this period of transition. Develop a succession plan for key leadership roles to ensure continuity and stability in the event of SLT changes, for example, the CSL.
- d) Situate the plan within the context of collaboration with the DBF and incorporate relevant recommendations from this Audit.

Governance

12.11 The Cathedral maintains an appropriate governance structure with a range of oversight meetings that align with the expectations of the CofE and fulfil all relevant regulatory requirements, including those of the Charity Commission. Chapter provides governance oversight and is chaired by the Dean. Its trustees are individually and collectively responsible for safeguarding. It is therefore important that the membership of Chapter are able to apply focused strategic scrutiny. It is also important that there is a differentiation between governance and executive operational oversight and direction via the SLT.

12.12 The Audit saw evidence from Chapter meetings relating to regular and detailed safeguarding updates. These ranged from safeguarding training initiatives, policy reviews and updates on new casework systems, to a new risk assessment approach and a focus

on safer recruitment. Whilst this is positive, the records provided imply that these were briefings and there is little evidence of professional curiosity or robust challenge.

- 12.13 Minutes from the SLT (the executive body) were also examined. These evidence a range of safeguarding and operational issues being addressed, such as the complexities of managing safeguarding concerns, a Safer Church Agreement (now referred to as Safeguarding Agreements), implementing new measures (such as CCTV and training), questions over the application of the policy consultation process and leadership changes.
- 12.14 Balancing the responsibilities between strategic and operational activity is important and differentiating such roles is key to good governance and oversight. From a governance perspective, membership within Chapter is key and the Audit is aware that the last time the Cathedral recruited for Chapter, only one person applied. To address this, the Dean has been actively recruiting new members from the local community, with a focus on introducing a more diverse range of individuals with different sets of skills and backgrounds. The Audit supports this approach and in order to ensure appropriate scrutiny (and reduce any perception of conflict of interest), the following consideration is relevant.
- 12.15 The current Chapter CSL (Residentiary Canon) occupies a significant safeguarding role through which he has positively influenced and supported the development of Chapter and its ability to maintain an informed line of sight on safeguarding. However, as a Residentiary Canon, he also has executive responsibilities. These include oversight of music and choristers. Historically, these are high-risk areas for safeguarding, and the combination of responsibilities could create a perceived conflict of interest in his role as CSL. In order to address this issue and strengthen the independent scrutiny of safeguarding challenge, the Audit makes the following recommendation:

Recommendation C4: The Cathedral should appoint an appropriately experienced independent non-executive with responsibility for safeguarding. The Audit is aware of this good practice in another Cathedral and the benefit it brings. This individual would ensure that there is no conflict of interest, and they would have the ability to bring fresh thinking and challenge to the meetings. Accepting this recommendation would mean the current Residentiary Canon, though no longer designated CSL, would remain a member of Chapter due to their role. This is seen as positive, preserving their valuable corporate memory.

12.16 To ensure effective governance and oversight of safeguarding, it is recommended that the Chapter clearly differentiates its role from operational issues.

Recommendation C5: A Safeguarding Management Subcommittee (SMC) of the Chapter should be established, operating with delegated authority, to provide detailed oversight of:

- a) The development and maintenance of safeguarding strategy, policy, and training.
- b) Strategic safeguarding risks and specific tasks, such as developing, delivering, and overseeing the safeguarding delivery plan (incorporating the role and function of the current Task Group).
- c) This sub-committee of Chapter should be configured by applying a skills, inclusion and diversity lens to the appointment of its members. A mix of executive and appropriate external representation along with the CSO/A (or in their absence DSO/A) and DSAP chair. This would ensure collaboration and a good line of sight across the diocese as well as expert input and challenge.
- d) The sub-committee could be chaired by the Non-Executive Independent member of Chapter.
- e) The sub-committee should meet quarterly or as developing needs demand.

- f) The chair of this group should also sit on the Audit / Risk Committee. This will ensure consistent information sharing regarding safeguarding risks and mitigation strategies.

12.17 During the site visit, the Audit learned that consideration was being given to formalising a Safeguarding Operational Group (SOG). This group would have a remit to focus on scrutinising day-to-day operational safeguarding practices. The Audit supports this suggestion. Such a group would concentrate on the immediacy of operational issues and be comprised of internal (Cathedral) and external (DBF and community) frontline representatives. For greatest impact, it would meet monthly, be chaired by the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer/Advisor (CSO/A), and report to the Chair of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

Recommendation C6: A Safeguarding Operations Group (SOG) should be established.

This group should:

- a) Be comprised of frontline staff / volunteers and appropriate and relevant DBF / parish representatives.
- b) Meet monthly to discuss and address operational safeguarding issues.
- c) Be chaired by the CSO/A.
- d) Report directly to the SLT, with the Chair providing regular updates and reports.
- e) This meeting would subsume and formalise the current CSO/A bi-monthly meetings.

Recommendation C7: To ensure effective governance and accountability, all Cathedral meetings (including Chapter, Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Safeguarding Management Committee (SMC), Safeguarding Operational Group (SOG), and any other safeguarding-related meetings, whether impromptu or pre-organised) should adhere to the following protocols:

- a) **Pre-set Agendas:** Circulate a clear and concise agenda in advance of each meeting to ensure focused discussions and efficient use of time.
- b) **Accurate Minutes:** Record detailed and accurate minutes, capturing key discussions, decisions made, and action items assigned.
- c) **Action Tracking:** Monitor and report on the progress of agreed actions from previous meetings to ensure accountability and follow-through.

12.18 The Audit welcomes the fact that the Cathedral is in the process of recruiting additional HR staff to support safer recruitment and other HR-related tasks. This is an important step towards separating HR and safeguarding functions. That said, at present there is the potential for confusion between safeguarding and HR responsibilities. This could hinder effective safeguarding practices. To address this, the following is recommended:

Recommendation C8: The Cathedral should develop and clearly communicate a document outlining the distinct roles and responsibilities of HR and safeguarding personnel, including a focus on areas where overlap may occur (e.g., recruitment, disciplinary procedures, staff wellbeing). In doing so, the following should be established:

- a) A clear referral pathway for any issues requiring clarification.
- b) A referral pathway to the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer / Advisor (CSO/A) for guidance.
- c) An escalation process. If agreement cannot be reached, escalate the issue to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) Chair for resolution.
- d) Reinforce safer recruitment responsibilities, i.e., reiterate that safer recruitment is primarily an HR function, with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer / Advisor (DSO/A) or CSO/A becoming involved only when a potential safeguarding concern is identified during the recruitment process (e.g., a DBS check reveals a caution, conviction or other legitimate concern).

The Cathedral Safeguarding Officer / Advisor

12.19 The CSO/A provides a part-time safeguarding role at the Cathedral. The appointment has undoubtedly assisted the Cathedral's improvement journey and this report has highlighted some of the good work done. That said, whilst the Audit was told that the safeguarding capacity needs in the Cathedral are met, it does not agree. Additional resilience, continuity of approach and enhanced supervision can, in the opinion of the Audit, be achieved by consolidating the CSO/A within the DST. This will not affect the CSO's primary function in the Cathedral, but will mean that they are professionally supervised, supported and line managed by the DSO/A.

12.20 Such an approach will consolidate safeguarding resources, align with the Audits recommendation in Part One of this report for a Director of Safeguarding and the formation of an operationally independent safeguarding Directorate. (See Recommendation D5).

From a Cathedral perspective, the Audit makes the following recommendation:

Recommendation C9: The current CSO should be fully embedded as a CSA (given they will be line managed by the DSO/A) and part of the DST. This will deliver a consolidated resource, a uniform approach to safeguarding policy and practice and the ability to flex when additional support is required.

Recommendation C10: The current MOU (2021) should be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

Choristers

12.21 Lincoln Cathedral dedicates significant resourcing and commitment to the safeguarding of its choristers. This is supported by a well-structured team comprising the Director and Assistant Director of Music, Choir Manager, Matron, and numerous adult chaperones. Additionally, the provision of a dedicated Song School building allows the Cathedral to prioritise safety and wellbeing of the choristers.

12.22 Lincoln Cathedral recruits its choristers from a diverse range of schools across the city and surrounding areas, as opposed to relying solely on a single or more local independent school(s). This approach widens the access, offering children from various educational backgrounds the opportunity to become choristers—an experience that might otherwise be inaccessible. The Cathedral ensures that the child’s education remains a priority, with contracts being contingent upon each school’s agreement.

12.23 The Director of Music brings valuable experience as a former teacher. The Audit observed the positive safeguarding culture and examples of a strong understanding of behaviour management techniques. Informal, ad-hoc training in appropriate adult-child relationships is provided to choral and organ scholars, many of whom are recent graduates. Behavioural

incidents are managed inclusively, with scholars involved in discussions to set the tone for respect and expected conduct. This is good practice.

Parent and Chorister Views

12.24 Parents are provided opportunities to discuss their child’s progress and raise concerns throughout the year, with an ‘open door’ policy being cited by both staff and parents. However, parent engagement with the Audit was low, limiting the extent to which their views could be fully understood. Those who did participate spoke positively of the staff and confirmed that their children felt safe and happy as choristers.

12.25 Chorister views echoed this sentiment. In Audit based activity conducted with choristers across ten Cathedrals this year, Lincoln scored amongst the highest for positive rapport with staff and children’s comfortability in seeking support. This culture of safety is commendable and evidenced in various areas of practice. However, safeguarding signposting in the Song School was noted to be lacking. Ensuring that children have clear, visible signposting to adults they can approach for help would further reinforce the safeguarding culture.

Recommendation C11: Child-friendly safeguarding posters should be introduced in the Song School, featuring photos of key staff and clear reminders of safeguarding procedures.

Transport Provision

12.26 The Cathedral provides transport for choristers to and from schools in the form of taxis, minibuses, or walking with a chaperone. During the Audit, this system was observed in action and is commended for its thorough safeguarding approach. Chaperones ensure that children are escorted from vehicles and are never left alone with taxi drivers. This practice, while potentially laborious, has been consistently maintained over time, with

parents, children, and staff all confirming its reliability.

12.27 The role of choral and organ scholars in chaperoning was observed to be of a high standard, reflecting the culture set by senior staff. However, chaperones should receive training on road safety practices that are in line with standards used in schools across the UK. This includes clear guidance on positioning staff at the front and rear of groups, ensuring children are supervised appropriately, and acting as a barrier between children and oncoming traffic when crossing roads.

Recommendation C12: Chaperones should receive training on road safety in line with standards used in UK schools.

Other Safety Provisions

12.28 Choristers benefit from dedicated, chorister-only toilets within the Song School. While in the Cathedral, they have access to toilets separate from public areas, which are accessible only via a key held by staff.

12.29 To further ensure the children's safety, the Cathedral employs a frequently changing 'safeguarding password' system for when the child is being collected by someone other than the person or persons they are expecting or have on file. If the person collecting the child is not known to the Cathedral, they must provide the safeguarding password, and the primary contact must confirm that someone different will be collecting the child. Good practice is further demonstrated through the proactive gathering of information regarding individuals who are explicitly not allowed to collect the child.

Information Sharing

12.30 Lincoln Cathedral exhibits good safeguarding practices, such as sharing photographs of chaperones and key chorister staff with schools to ensure proper identification. Schools are also introduced to chaperones and staff directly to ease communication between both parties.

12.31 While information sharing between the Cathedral and schools is less frequent than in other Cathedrals due to Lincoln's dispersed recruitment model, the relationship between parents and staff appears strong. However, it is vital to ensure that inter-institutional communication is not overlooked, as schools and the Cathedral collectively hold critical information about the children that can aid in safeguarding and promoting their welfare.

Recording Low-Level Concerns

12.32 The Cathedral currently has a low-level concerns log within the music department, but it appears to be used inconsistently and is not fully embedded into practice. Staff have recognised this gap and are reflective about improving their recording systems. Strengthening this area would enable the Cathedral to better identify patterns of concern and share relevant information with schools.

Recommendation C13: A formalised low-level concerns log should be implemented as part of daily practice, allowing for patterns of behaviour to be tracked and shared with schools at regular intervals. Care must be taken to ensure that access to these logs is appropriately restricted to safeguard privacy.

Online Safety

12.33 During the pandemic, the Cathedral introduced iPads for chorister use, and this provision has continued post-pandemic. Encouragingly, choristers receive online safety training

specific to iPad use and broader digital risks, which is good practice that should be maintained and renewed as the online world moves at a fast pace.

Scheduling and Wellbeing

12.34 Balancing school, chorister duties, and other commitments is a complex task. At Lincoln Cathedral, this challenge has been well-managed, with scheduling practices that support children's well-being. Staff are reported to be flexible and supportive, particularly during busy periods such as exams, prioritising what is best for the child. This proactive and child-centred approach is commendable and reflects a strong safeguarding ethos.

Policies

12.35 Lincoln Cathedral has a robust set of policies surrounding the choristers that are subject to regular review. The Safeguarding Choristers Policy, in particular, provides valuable guidance for staff and parents to ensure a shared understanding of safeguarding principles.

12.36 However, an area requiring attention relates to the policy's guidance on the use of restraint. While it is recognised that the need for restraint is an infrequent occurrence, any ambiguity in this area poses a potential risk. Policies that lack clarity may inadvertently lead to unsafe practices or hesitation at critical moments. In its current form, the guidance is limited to a single bullet point, which fails to provide sufficient detail on the appropriate use, limitations, and subsequent actions related to restraint.

Recommendation C14: The Safeguarding Choristers Policy should be revised to include a detailed section on the use of restraint. This should outline when restraint may be necessary, clearly defining the rare circumstances under which restraint might be justified, emphasising its use as a last resort to prevent harm. It should provide detailed instructions on safe and approved techniques to minimise physical and emotional risk. Additionally, it should specify the steps to be taken following the use of restraint, including documentation, communication with parents, and reflective learning for staff.

13 Prevention

- 13.1 Safer recruitment policies and practices are a vital part of creating safer environments, discouraging unsuitable individuals from joining an organisation and preventing the abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- 13.2 Lincoln Cathedral has a system in place to support safer recruitment and various policies and procedures that define practice expectations. A range of checks are undertaken to ensure the suitability of applicants such as references, DBS checks and confidential declaration forms for eligible roles. Relevant messaging on job descriptions also reference the Cathedral's commitment to safeguarding, and training is provided for those involved in the recruitment process. These measures help to create an environment that deters those who might be unsuitable or pose a risk to the young and vulnerable, from working in the Cathedral.
- 13.3 The Audit found that current procedures within the Cathedral do not require DBS checks (at any level) for education volunteers involved in school visits. However, Government guidance for DBS checks for working with children in places of worship stipulates:

"If an individual does not teach the children but is responsible for their care or supervision on more than 3 days in a 30-day period [they] can get an Enhanced DBS check with a Children's Barred List check. If they do it less often, they can get an Enhanced DBS check without a Children's Barred List check."¹⁰

- 13.4 The Audit therefore makes the following recommendation.

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-checks-for-working-with-children-in-places-of-worship/dbs-checks-for-working-with-children-in-places-of-worship#>

Recommendation C15: The Cathedral should review the functions of volunteers and other roles where a DBS check is currently not undertaken, including Education Volunteers to ensure they follow contemporary Government guidance. For each role, the Cathedral should establish whether a check is necessary and at what level. To note, a basic check can be undertaken for any position or purpose.

13.5 The Audit collected feedback from staff and volunteers throughout the Cathedral regarding how safeguarding matters are addressed across various levels and groups. These groups include weekly staff meetings, Chapter meetings, and quarterly Volunteer Team Leader meetings. In respect of the Quarterly Volunteer Team Leader meetings, it is positive that safeguarding is a standing item on the agenda and anonymised incidents have been discussed as an opportunity to learn. Additionally, at the congregational level, safeguarding themes have been covered during sermons such as Safeguarding Sunday and Lent 2024.

13.6 The Cathedral has undertaken some steps towards developing, adopting and sharing good safeguarding practice. The Cathedral's Safeguarding Handbook has been approved and a further example of this can be seen through the recently developed guide for rough sleepers, which recognises the need to safeguard the wellbeing of both rough sleepers and those attending the Cathedral. This is good practice.

13.7 However, the Audit also gathered feedback which indicated a lack of clarity regarding safeguarding policies. One individual commented to the Audit:

"It is now unclear which policies are in effect, and new policies have not been rolled out across the Cathedral."

13.8 In this respect, the Audit fully supports the Cathedral's current efforts to implement updates to several key policies (e.g., the Safeguarding Policy and Safeguarding Choristers Policy).

13.9 To improve the accessibility and uptake of safeguarding policies and practice, the Cathedral is actively working to enhance its internal communications via its recently created and evolving intranet page. The Audit supports this initiative and believes that a centralised platform for essential documents, contact information, and resources will strengthen safeguarding arrangements. It will help to ensure that everyone has access to the same up-to-date information, enabling staff and volunteers to stay informed and engaged.

13.10 The Cathedral employs a variety of methods to ensure safeguarding remains a priority. These include prominently displayed Safer Church posters throughout the Cathedral, informative leaflets distributed to the congregation, and regular e-mails from the CSO to staff and volunteer Team Leads.

13.11 Communications to volunteers are shared with staff and volunteer team leaders. The volunteer team leaders are responsible for forwarding messages to their teams. Whilst the Audit received feedback that this is the preferred method for volunteers, this process can be unreliable, and communications may not reach everyone.

Recommendation C16: The Cathedral should conduct regular surveys or feedback sessions with staff and volunteers to assess the effectiveness of safeguarding communication channels and identify any gaps or areas for improvement.

Recommendation C17: To improve safeguarding communication with volunteers and ensure messages reach a wider audience, the Cathedral should implement an approach that combines the existing system with more direct methods such as a dedicated mailing list for volunteer updates, announcements, and general information.

13.12 In its efforts to raise awareness, the Cathedral uses a range of tools to promote and disseminate information to its key stakeholders. These include a safeguarding handbook, posters, newsletters, and pew news leaflets. Whilst not directly related to safeguarding, the Audit observed positive reach and engagement through its social media and believes there are opportunities to enhance these channels as a mechanism to connect, inform and share important safeguarding information.

Recommendation C18: The Cathedral should develop a communication plan aligned with its safeguarding communication strategy, which aims to embed key safeguarding messages throughout its online and digital channels. Consideration should be given to understanding the needs of followers, adopting different techniques specific to the platform in use and utilisation of relevant awareness days, campaigns and events to amplify the message.

13.13 Actively seeking and acting on the views of children, young people and vulnerable adults is a key component to effective prevention planning. Whilst there are opportunities for the Cathedral to gather such feedback, these can be ad-hoc and infrequent. In this respect, the Audit believes there is the potential to introduce more defined mechanisms that help to facilitate this happening in a more structured manner.

13.14 Importantly, the Cathedral recognises the needs of vulnerable adults and survivors of abuse, ensuring their experiences inform safeguarding policies and procedures. This is addressed further in the *Victims and Survivors* section of this report.

Recommendation C19: The Cathedral should review the arrangements it has in place to capture the voices and experiences of children, vulnerable adults and victims and survivors. It should develop a defined engagement plan that ensures stakeholders are identified, spoken to frequently, and that their views are routinely reported to Chapter and relevant committees. The plan should also include arrangements for how such voices influence contemporary practice and new initiatives.

13.15 The Cathedral maintains a comprehensive range of risk assessments to effectively manage potential risks across various activities. These assessments include documents such as the 'Standard Risk Analysis and Risk Management' form, the 'Church Safety Plan', templates for activity-specific risk assessments, and dedicated assessments for events like afternoon rehearsals and choir recordings. Additionally, the Cathedral has protocols in place for safeguarding junior volunteers and lone workers.

13.16 The Audit gathered positive staff feedback on how radios are used to communicate with key personnel to improve safety measures at the Cathedral.

13.17 With regards to the Cathedral's physical infrastructure, CCTV monitoring plays a crucial role in enhancing its overall security. Nevertheless, the Audit identified some uncertainty amongst key personnel regarding the operational status of existing CCTV systems.

Recommendation C20: The Cathedral should establish a clear policy outlining the scope of CCTV coverage, monitoring arrangements, and access protocols. This policy should specify:

- a) Areas covered by CCTV: Clearly define the areas monitored by CCTV.
- b) Monitoring procedures: Detail how the CCTV system is monitored and by whom.
- c) Access to footage: Define who has access to CCTV footage and under what circumstances.
- d) Recording and retention: Specify recording practices and how long footage is retained.
- e) The prominent placement of warning notices to alert people that CCTV is in use: These notices should clearly state the purpose of the CCTV system and include a contact number for individuals to call if they require further details about the system, its operation, or their rights regarding their data.

14 Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk

- 14.1 Cathedrals are more than just large churches; they are centres of worship, community, and support, attracting a wide range of people, including children and vulnerable adults. This creates a complex environment where safeguarding is paramount and strong measures are essential to manage risks in these unique settings.
- 14.2 The Audit observed a considered approach to safeguarding at Lincoln Cathedral aimed at identifying, managing and mitigating risk. This framework includes having the relevant policies, procedures and guidance in place, as well as promoting a culture where everyone is aware of and responsible for safeguarding.
- 14.3 Safeguarding is included in the Cathedral's Risk Register and the Audit saw evidence of concerns and control measures being appropriately documented. The Audit believes that the register could be further strengthened by considering broader societal issues.

Recommendation C21: To further strengthen the Risk Register, it should be expanded to include a comprehensive assessment of safeguarding risks specific to the Cathedral's context and environment. This should include specific safeguarding focused consideration of:

- a) Risks arising from allegations of abuse or misconduct, mishandling of safeguarding cases, or negative publicity. This should include protocols for managing allegations, proactively searching for and addressing (open source) online criticism and media relations.
- b) Risks associated with the cost-of-living crisis, such as increased vulnerability to exploitation and abuse due to financial hardship. This could involve strategies to support vulnerable individuals and families and to prevent financial abuse.
- c) Risks associated with specific activities, such as youth groups, choir practices, or volunteer programmes. This should involve tailored risk assessments and safeguarding measures for each activity.

- d) Risks related to the security of the Cathedral building and its environs and the safety of visitors, staff, and volunteers, including lone working policies, security procedures, and emergency response plans.
- e) Risks associated with data breaches, online harassment, and reputational damage through social media or other online material. This should include measures to protect sensitive data and manage the Cathedral's online presence.

14.4 The DBF and Cathedral have a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which sets out the collaborative relationship of the DBF and Cathedral Safeguarding resources in ensuring a safer environment for everyone. This includes sharing information about any safeguarding concerns and working together to manage risks. As such, the Cathedral has joint access to the national Safeguarding Case Management System (NSCMS).

14.5 Established reporting pathways ensure that safeguarding concerns are addressed promptly and effectively. Individuals are encouraged to report any initial concerns to either the CSO or the Safeguarding Lead, who holds the position of Precentor. Contact information is available via the publicised email address or telephone number. In the absence of the CSO, the DST will provide support and guidance. This collaborative approach ensures continuity and a robust response to any safeguarding matter.

14.6 The MoU makes it clear that any concerns or allegations about a church officer must be reported to the DSA. In some cases, responsibility for managing a case may transfer to the DSA. The effectiveness of the DST and the Audit's recommendations are set out in *Part One* of this report which has equal relevance to the context of safeguarding at the Cathedral.

14.7 In the three-year period before the Audit, there were 10 safeguarding reports. Outcomes of these resulted in either advice or a referral. These ranged from criminal activity to lower-level issues that required support, signposting or advice and guidance. There were reportedly nine cases in the 12-month period prior to the Audit, all of which resulted in referrals to statutory authorities.

14.8 Whilst no definitive conclusions can be made about the volume of this activity, it is relevant to note findings from the Audit's survey involving the Cathedral's workforce. Whilst the majority of respondents knew how to escalate a safeguarding concern, more than a third lacked confidence in the escalation process or were unsure if they had confidence in it.

Recommendation C22: In partnership with the DST, the Cathedral should proactively engage with its workforce to promote confidence in reporting and escalating concerns.

14.9 The audit of the Cathedral's safety planning revealed a mixed picture. While there were clear strengths, such as the regular reviews, effective collaboration with external agencies, and some consideration of the parties involved, concerns were raised regarding inconsistencies and a lack of clarity in risk assessment.

14.10 The Audit found that the assessments examined by auditors contained potentially contradictory statements, with initial assertions that could be perceived as suggesting no risk, followed by an outline of a range of specific risks. This inconsistency could undermine the reliability of the assessments and raises questions about the thoroughness of the risk analysis process. Furthermore, the analysis of risks often lacked detail and specificity, which could impede a comprehensive understanding of potential threats.

14.11 Finally, the Audit noted an overly optimistic view of risk prevention, suggesting that risks could be entirely eliminated rather than effectively managed and mitigated. This approach fails to acknowledge the dynamic nature of risk and the need for ongoing vigilance and adaptation. These inconsistencies and lack of clarity could ultimately undermine the effectiveness of a safety plan. The following recommendation is therefore made to strengthen practice:

Recommendation C23: To ensure the highest level of safety, the Cathedral should:

- a) Collaborate with the DST and thoroughly review its existing Safety Plans against national CofE practice guidance.
- b) Re-examine the current Safety Plan, to address:
 - I. Conflicting risk assessments: Ensure that assessments do not contain contradictions.
 - II. The lack of clarity in risk analysis: Ensure that risk analysis is appropriately detailed and specific.
 - III. The overly optimistic view of risk prevention: Ensure that assessments are not overoptimistic. For example, suggesting risks can be entirely eliminated.

14.12 In respect of the administration of safety planning and the management of concerns, the Audit believes this could be improved by adopting the guiding principles of the NSCMS. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring a consistent approach between the Cathedral and the DST when using features such as assigning categories, creating ‘Associated People’, and recording summaries with key information. This will help ensure clarity, consistency and aid in the supervision of safeguarding cases.

14.13 The Audit found the DST demonstrated a more consistent and thorough application of national safeguarding principles within the NSCMS. Indeed, the Audit believes enhanced formal working arrangements between the two will strengthen practice in this respect.

Recommendation C24: The Cathedral should standardise its use of the NSCMS to align with the DST's practice, while adhering to national guiding principles. See also Recommendation D18.

- 14.14 The CSO holds primary responsibility for case management at the Cathedral, with quality assurance and supervision provided by the NST regional lead and, where necessary, support provided by the Safeguarding Lead and the DST.
- 14.15 One Core Group convened in the past year was led by the NST. Notwithstanding that the parameters of this case extended beyond Lincoln Cathedral, the records viewed by the Audit demonstrate a thoughtful approach to risk management, appropriate challenge, communication with relevant organisations, and detailed record-keeping.
- 14.16 In respect of information sharing arrangements, the Audit's findings for the DBF are set out in *Part One* of this report and have equal relevance to the context of the Cathedral given the Memorandum of Understanding in place between the two bodies.
- 14.17 The Cathedral has a defined escalation process to help manage any differences of opinion about safeguarding concerns. This reflects good practice.
- 14.18 The Cathedral is registered as a charity and has a legal requirement to submit Serious Incident Reports to the Charity Commission. Whilst it has yet to make any reports, the Cathedral follows the House of Bishops' guidance set out in 'Safeguarding Serious Incident Reporting to the Charity Commission'.
- 14.19 The Cathedral's Data Protection Policy specifies its legal responsibility to demonstrate compliance with UK data protection legislation and GDPR. The use of the NSCMS for handling personal information related to safeguarding cases aligns with these

requirements. Various documents, including the Safeguarding Handbook, the Safeguarding Policy (unapproved) and the Privacy Policy provide guidance on data protection. Clergy, staff and volunteers receive training to a basic level on data protection, information sharing and how to identify a Data Subject Request. Depending on the role, some may be trained to a higher level. This is good practice.

14.20 That said, the Audit was made aware of cases where volunteers may be using personal emails for sharing information. Although such communication is primarily focused on non-confidential matters, the email address for the CSO is widely publicised as a form of communication for reporting concerns. As such, the Audit makes the following recommendation.

Recommendation C25: Volunteers should be provided with a Cathedral email address for the purpose of communicating with others and sharing information about Cathedral / work related issues.

14.21 Findings from the Audit's survey (from the Cathedral's workforce) indicated that the majority of respondents were aware of the privacy notice in respect of data protection. This is positive and reflects the overall sustained efforts to comply with data protection requirements.

15 Victims and Survivors

- 15.1 The Audit recognises that the Cathedral has a Memorandum of Understanding in place between the Cathedral and the DBF, whereby their Safeguarding Advocate coordinates survivor support and advocacy across the Diocese and Cathedral. The MoU sets out that the Safeguarding Advocate will collaborate with the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer (CSO) to provide consistent support. See Part One of this report regarding Diocesan led victim and survivor engagement.
- 15.2 Lincoln Cathedral is currently drafting its Safeguarding Strategy for 2025-27. This strategy aligns with the National Safeguarding Standards and includes a dedicated section for victims and survivors. This is good practice. The strategy addresses the core areas of the National Safeguarding Standards with a focus on supporting victims and survivors.
- 15.3 While direct engagement with victims and survivors has been limited in recent years, the Audit acknowledges the Cathedral's efforts to offer support following Core Group proceedings. Positively, the Cathedral maintains ongoing informal engagement with a victim and survivor, using their input to inform procedures and learning. This is good practice. However, notwithstanding this engagement, the Audit is of the opinion that, whilst a low number of victims and survivors have a direct connection with the Cathedral, this should not prohibit listening and learning opportunities. As set out in Part One of this report, the Cathedral should collaborate, with the DBF and DSAP in particular, to facilitate listening and learning events.

Recommendation C26: The Cathedral should partner with the DSAP as it develops an initiative to create opportunities for the Church to listen to, engage with and respond to victims and survivors (see also Recommendation D9).

15.4 Cathedral staff come into contact with a wide range of individuals during their day-to-day work, from worshippers and local visitors to school children and tourists. The most common safeguarding issues that staff and volunteers deal with varies depending on their roles on the Cathedral floor. This diverse interaction brings varied safeguarding challenges for church officers, often related to homelessness and mental health. The Audit supports the Cathedral's collaboration with external agencies, noting good links with the local police, and the Rough Sleeping Team at the city of Lincoln council.

15.5 The Cathedral website prioritises safeguarding with a dedicated webpage offering resources and support. Contact information, including email addresses and phone numbers are provided for both the CSO and Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA). Additionally, the website's safeguarding page includes a dedicated section on support for survivors of abuse. Comprehensive information on the role of the Safeguarding Advocate is present along with contact details. Furthermore, it provides links to external support organisations like Safe Spaces, Victim Lincs, and the NSPCC, as well as resources from the Diocesan website. This is reassuring. The Strategic Lead for Safeguarding on Chapter is also a visible presence both on the Cathedral's website and the Cathedral floor. The Audit has also seen a range of material which provides guidance on reporting safeguarding concerns. This is good practice.

16 Learning, Supervision and Support

Safeguarding Learning

- 16.1 The Cathedral has faced previous challenges in documenting and tracking safeguarding learning and supervision activity, making it difficult to assess the full impact of past initiatives. However, the new CSO/A is committed to implementing positive changes and some good work has been undertaken to strengthen the Cathedral's overall arrangements in this regard.
- 16.2 Prior to the commencement of the current CSO in March 2024, the Cathedral followed the Diocesan Safeguarding Strategy, but there was no training strategy in place. Since then, the CSO has created strategies and plans that provide a foundational structure, which will evolve as momentum and cultural change are achieved. This long-term view prioritises the development of a diverse approach to safeguarding training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD). The Audit supports this approach.
- 16.3 The Cathedral does have a training programme in place; leadership training is managed and provided by the DBF training lead and access to online portal training is available when required. Positively, the current CSO has implemented a new training plan to ensure the proper documentation of training participation and access to a broader spectrum of course material. Recent training initiatives have included Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Fraud, Online Safety and Prevent training, supported by external expertise from organisations such as Respect and IDAS. These efforts have been recognised, with Lincoln Cathedral receiving bronze status from the Council Domestic Abuse Partnership, reflecting significant progress in raising awareness and supporting staff in this area.

16.4 Whilst progress has been made, participation levels for safeguarding training at the Cathedral require improvement. Records indicate that several staff members have yet to complete basic and foundation courses.

Recommendation C27: The Cathedral should prioritise increasing compliance rates across all training levels by implementing reminders and targeted support for those overdue.

16.5 Whilst the Memorandum of Understanding between the Cathedral and the DBF includes the provision of safeguarding training for Cathedral staff, a review of this agreement is outstanding. With the role and functions of the new CSO having a relevance to training, the Audit believes it would be sensible to revisit the specifics in this respect.

Recommendation C28: The Memorandum of Understanding should be revisited to confirm its continued relevance and to refocus efforts on the provision of training for Cathedral staff.

16.6 As with the DBF audit, the need for training at the Cathedral that delves deeper into the understanding of offenders was similarly identified, particularly those who commit sexual offences. Whilst the NST includes this topic within existing materials, the Cathedral would benefit from additional, detailed sessions to enhance knowledge about offender behaviour and risk management.

Recommendation C29: The Cathedral should work with the DST to introduce theme-specific training modules focused on understanding the behaviour of offenders, particularly sexual predators. These modules should be accessible to relevant individuals within the Cathedral.

Clergy Support

16.7 The DBF provides the overarching structures for clergy support. For those involved in safeguarding matters (and where the need arises), there is access to pastoral care initiatives and the Clergy Wellbeing Officer, alongside a 24/7 counselling helpline.

Supervision and Support of Safeguarding Roles

16.8 Those in safeguarding roles at the Cathedral are provided with a structured induction programme. This includes pre-read materials, targeted one-to-one meetings with key personnel, and an introduction to safeguarding processes. The induction programme is reviewed periodically by the CSO to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

16.9 The CSO benefits from appropriate supervision through established regional and local structures. Supervision includes regular meetings with the DSAP Chair and the Regional NST lead, ensuring accountability and support.

16.10 The Cathedral maintains established pathways with local authorities, including the police and safeguarding boards. These relationships, developed through PCR2 and Core Group practices, facilitate effective information sharing and collaborative safeguarding approaches.

17 Conclusion

- 17.1 Despite starting from a challenging position, the Cathedral is experiencing a wave of positive change. This transformation is driven by new leadership, developing partnerships, and a determination to improve. Progress is evident, with growing confidence in the Cathedral's culture and practice. The new Dean is fostering a more open and collaborative environment, which has been instrumental in driving this positive shift.
- 17.2 Demonstrating good practice, the Cathedral provides thoughtful, child centred support for its choristers and safeguarding focused partnerships with participating schools. More generally, they are actively taking steps to improve safeguarding, with a clear desire to invest in better practices. For instance, the recent appointment of a dedicated CSO has injected fresh energy and focus, leading to positive (albeit gradual) changes in training and policy.
- 17.3 Some potentially stubborn challenges appear to remain. For example, a significant minority of staff still feel that a safeguarding culture is not fully embedded. Addressing their concerns is crucial to maintaining momentum. The governance and executive oversight structures also require strengthening, and whilst the commitment of the Cathedral to respond is welcomed, oversight practices also need sharpening. The Chapter needs to adopt a more questioning approach, actively scrutinising and challenging the information they receive. There also needs to be a clearer distinction between the executive role of the SLT and that of the governing body, with the respective remits of HR and safeguarding being better articulated.
- 17.4 Looking forward, integrating the CSO within the DST would offer invaluable benefits and lay the groundwork for an operationally independent Safeguarding Directorate. This would

provide additional support, enhanced supervision, and direct access to broader safeguarding expertise, including in the key areas of casework and offender management.

17.5 By tackling these issues and implementing the Audit's recommendations in full, the Cathedral can solidify its commitment to safeguarding. This will ensure a safer and more welcoming environment for all who work, volunteer, and worship there.

17.6 Finally, please note that reading this brief conclusion does not provide the insight and detail available in the body of the Audit report.

Appendices

18 Appendix 1 – DBF Recommendations

Recommendation D1: Define Roles and Responsibilities:

The Diocesan Bishop, in collaboration with the DSA/O and the DSAP Chair, should develop a formal policy or framework document that specifically outlines the safeguarding responsibilities of Suffragan Bishops. This document should define expectations regarding:

- a) Monitoring clergy compliance with safeguarding training.
- b) Following up on incomplete DBS checks.
- c) Chairing meetings with clergy who have not fulfilled safeguarding requirements.
- d) Reporting concerns to the Diocesan Bishop and / or DSA.

Recommendation D2: Provide Support, Resources, and Training:

The DSA should ensure Suffragan Bishops have access to:

- a) Up-to-date safeguarding training materials and resources.
- b) Regular briefings and updates from the safeguarding team.

Recommendation D3: Review and Evaluation:

The DSA, in consultation with the Suffragan Bishops and the DSAP Chair, should review the effectiveness of these measures after one year and recommend and agree any necessary adjustments with the Diocesan Bishop.

Recommendation D4: The DBF should develop a more structured collaborative framework, which should ensure that Archdeacons' visitations and other engagements at Deanery and parish levels consistently reinforce and promote good safeguarding practice through the following:

- a) Standardised visitation procedures that set out clear and consistent approaches to visitations with defined procedures for integrating and assessing safeguarding.
- b) The delivery of mandatory briefings before visitations to equip Archdeacons with the necessary safeguarding information and guidance, and structured debriefing processes to ensure feedback is shared with the safeguarding team.

Recommendation D5: Establish a Director of Safeguarding Role

To enhance safeguarding leadership and ensure robust independent oversight, the DBF should establish a Director of Safeguarding role. This role should be structured to provide the highest levels of operational independence and be recognised as the authoritative voice on safeguarding matters. This will provide greater autonomy and credibility when challenging senior clergy and ensure that safeguarding is prioritised at the highest level.

To ensure the effectiveness of this role, the following is required:

- a) **Clearly defined reporting lines and decision-making authority:** The Director should be a member of, and report to, the Bishop's Council, Chapter, and Senior Leadership Team (SLT). This will ensure direct access to key decision-makers and facilitate effective communication and collaboration.
- b) **Formal memorandum of understanding:** A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) should be established between the DBF, Parish Parochial Church Councils (PCCs), and the Cathedral, clearly stating that the Director of Safeguarding has the responsibility and authority to provide insight, oversight, advice, and support to any church body within the Diocese. This will formalise the Director's authority and ensure their role is understood and respected across all levels of the Church.
- c) **Escalation pathways:** The Director must have the ability to escalate concerns directly to higher church authorities, including the National Director of Safeguarding, if necessary. This

will provide an essential safeguard in situations where concerns are not addressed adequately within the Diocese.

d) **Adequate resources and staffing:** The Director requires sufficient resources and staffing to effectively deliver and oversee safeguarding across the Diocese, including the Cathedral. This cohort of staff should cover all professional safeguarding personnel, including those deployed in the Cathedral, with additional resources to backfill the post of DSA/DSO and at least one additional Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (ADSA).

e) **Independent safeguarding directorate:** Amalgamate all safeguarding resources into an operationally independent Diocesan Safeguarding Directorate, led by the Director of Safeguarding. This will consolidate expertise, streamline processes, and enhance the overall effectiveness of safeguarding within the diocese.

Recommendation D6: A formal structure for the one-to-one meeting between the Bishop and DSO should be implemented. This should include a set agenda with agreed minutes to evidence decisions, agreed actions, and provide a clear record of discussions on sensitive issues.

Recommendation D7: To ensure a consistent and collaborative approach to safeguarding at the leadership level, the Diocesan Bishop should implement regular strategic safeguarding meetings with the following attendees:

- a) Diocesan Secretary
- b) Senior Clergy
- c) DSA/O
- d) DSAP Chair
- e) Dean
- f) Cathedral Safeguarding Lead (CSL)

To provide structure and focus, these meetings should:

- a) Be held quarterly.
- b) Follow a set agenda, that includes reviewing risk registers.
- c) Include agreed minutes to record key discussions, decisions, and action points.

Recommendation D8: The DSAP Chair, with support from the DSA/O, should maintain regular contact with local authority services, offering flexibility towards DSAP attendance and exploring alternative ways to involve them, such as:

- a) Focused quarterly (virtual or in person) one-to-one meetings with the chair of relevant multi-agency partnership boards.
- b) Participating in joint training events.
- c) Establishing informal information-sharing channels. (Sharing written reports / Lesson Learned Reviews and Adult and Children’s Safeguarding Practice Reviews or other relevant updates).
- d) Clearly document within DSAP meeting minutes how the Chair's professional network and other strategies are being utilised to mitigate the lack of direct representation from local authority services. This will provide transparency and demonstrate that alternative avenues for accessing information and expertise are being actively pursued.

Recommendation D9: To develop and maintain a multi-faceted approach that ensures victim and survivor voices are heard and their needs considered in the safeguarding decision-making processes, the DSAP should:

- a) Continue utilising the existing conduit for survivor voices through the DST’s victim / survivor advocate, allowing for and promoting trauma-informed engagement.

- b) Ensure that the chair of the survivor focus group (once established) has a seat on the DSAP if they desire, providing a direct link between the group and the DSAP's oversight function.
- c) Keep the invitation open for survivors to attend the DSAP if they wish.
- d) Plan outreach events, whereby members of DSAP attend established victim and survivors' forums to listen and learn.
- e) Facilitate listen and learn events by providing spaces within the Church estate for new victims and survivor groups to meet.

Recommendation D10: To enhance the DSAP's scrutiny function and to ensure effective monitoring of safeguarding activity across the Diocese, a system for receiving regular written updates from key safeguarding partners should be implemented.

- a) DSAP should identify and agree which agencies will be required to submit written updates. This may include the DST, Victims / Survivors Advocate, PSOs (representative), Archdeacons, CSL, DSLs in Cathedral linked schools, relevant Diocesan Departments (e.g., education, children & youth).
- b) Updates should be structured against a defined template that sets out the required format and contents.
- c) The frequency of updates should be agreed by DSAP, which could be quarterly or biannually.
- d) The updates should request evidence of impact. This would require partners to provide evidence of the impact of their safeguarding work, including statistics, case studies, or examples of good practice.
- e) Formal consideration of internal safeguarding reassurance audits, outcomes of LLRs and updates on associated action plans.

- f) The updates should be a standard agenda item at each DSAP meeting, with dedicated time being allocated to review and discuss the written updates. This will facilitate informed discussions and enable the DSAP to identify any areas requiring further attention or support.

Recommendation D11: To enhance Safeguarding Collaboration between the DBF and Cathedral, the following options should be collectively considered:

- a) Ensure that the DBF and Cathedral have aligned safeguarding policies, procedures, and practice standards to create a consistent approach.
- b) Organise joint safeguarding training and development opportunities for staff, volunteers, and leaders across the DBF, Cathedral and Diocese as a whole to build a shared understanding and culture.
- c) Explore ways to ensure the DSAP Chair has a voice in Cathedral safeguarding matters, such as through representation on the Cathedral Chapter or SMG.

Recommendation D12: Incoming files should be subject to a formal review by the DSA/O. This will provide verification of the CCSL statement and ensure those providing safeguarding support to new appointments are aware of their relevant experience, any areas of development, or potential vulnerabilities.

Recommendation D13: To ensure the timely receipt of clergy files, a robust follow-up system should be implemented. This system should include escalating prompts to the Diocese that has not yet forwarded the file. If the file remains outstanding, a letter should be sent from the Diocesan Bishop to the Bishop of the previous Diocese to establish the reason for the delay and to request immediate action. This will help to ensure that crucial safeguarding information is received promptly and that any potential risks are identified and addressed without delay.

Recommendation D14: The DBF should appoint a full-time addition to the DST, preferably someone with a social care background, as this will further enhance the team's skillset.

Recommendation D15: The DBF should formalise the deputy role, currently filled by the Safeguarding Advocate, ensuring clear terms of reference and dedicated time allocation.

Measures should be implemented by the DBF to prevent conflicts of interest between advocacy and case management responsibilities. This might involve separating these functions or providing clear guidance and supervision.

Recommendation D16: The DBF should consolidate the current administrative support by creating a dedicated Safeguarding Support Officer role within the DST. This role should have specific responsibilities for:

- a) Further development and rollout of Dashboards.
- b) Performance analysis.
- c) Training evaluations.
- d) Call filtering / management.

Recommendation D17: The DBF should optimise training provision by releasing the Training Coordinator from administrative tasks. This will enable them to adopt a more strategic approach to training and awareness-raising, such as developing each DST member to deliver specific aspects of training that will further enhance relationships and networks between the DST and parishes.

Recommendation D18: The current CSO should be fully embedded as part of the DST. This will deliver a consolidated resource, a uniform approach to safeguarding policy and practice and the ability to flex when additional support is required.

Recommendation D19: Mentoring:

- a) Assign a mentor with extensive experience in safeguarding leadership, ideally a current or former Director of Safeguarding from another Diocese or a related field. The current DSAP chair would be an ideal candidate.
- b) Define clear objectives for the mentoring relationship, focusing on the specific skills and knowledge required for a Strategic Directors role.
- c) Schedule regular meetings between the mentor and mentee, providing a safe space for discussion, reflection, and feedback.
- d) Facilitate opportunities for the DSA/O to observe their mentor in action, attending meetings, and participating in strategic planning activities.

Recommendation D20: Development Opportunities:

- a) Provide access to leadership training courses focusing on strategic thinking, decision-making, change management, and team leadership.
- b) Support attendance at national safeguarding conferences and workshops to stay abreast of best practice and network with other professionals.
- c) Arrange secondments or shadowing opportunities with other safeguarding leaders in different organisations, such as local authorities or charities.
- d) Assign the DSA/O to lead specific safeguarding projects to develop their project management skills and experience.

Recommendation D21: Ongoing Support and Review:

- a) Provide regular supervision sessions with the Regional NST representative to discuss progress, challenges, and areas for development.
- b) Conduct regular performance reviews to assess progress against objectives and identify further development needs.

- c) Collaboratively create a development plan with the DSA/O, outlining specific goals, timelines, and resources.

Recommendation D22: The DBF should ensure that its commitment to safeguarding is embedded in all job adverts, application forms and job descriptions.

Recommendation D23: The DBF should ensure they review the challenges and barriers that PSOs face when administrating the Dashboards and Hubs, and provide resources and materials specific to their needs to help them effectively fulfil their role. This may include, for example, easier access to video explainers, FAQs or 'How to' guides.

Recommendation D24: In order to assure itself of the quality and impact of Parish Dashboard data, the DBF should define and adopt a Parish Dashboard quality assurance process. While it should be built on the principle of 'working with' rather than 'doing to', it should involve dip sampling to test the veracity of Parish Dashboard data.

Recommendation D25: Routine and frequent meetings should always have an agenda and a record of the minutes and actions agreed. This is a critical process to facilitate the tracking of actions.

Recommendation D26: The DBF should facilitate regular face-to-face sessions and / or networking events for PSOs to learn and share good practice.

Recommendation D27: To ensure resources are readily available and widely used, the DBF should review and update the Safeguarding Resources section of its website. This section should facilitate access to all relevant local and national safeguarding materials, with it being routinely promoted through the DBF's communication channels, induction and training.

Recommendation D28: The DBF should adjust its communication plan to include key safeguarding messages via its digital channels. In order to enhance this engagement it should:

- a) Tailor content to resonate with the specific interests and preferences of followers on each platform.
- b) Employ diverse communication strategies suited to each platform's unique features and user expectations.
- c) Capitalise on relevant awareness days, campaigns, and events to amplify key messages and expand audience engagement.

Recommendation D29: The DBF should undertake a review to map the types of activities involving children and young people that are taking place within parishes, what the focus of such activities are and to identify any aspects of good practice and / or potential gaps.

Recommendation D30: Further to reviewing existing practice, the DBF should consider implementing new and / or extended models for youth participation in consultation with parishes and its existing networks.

Recommendation D31: When developing and delivering guidance on lone working, the DBF should review existing national materials and incorporate relevant resources into their plans.

Recommendation D32: Despite the 2024 Independent Safeguarding Audits Annual Report recommending that the NST develop a national template for a threshold document, the DST should explore the feasibility of implementing its own defined local threshold document. This document should clearly specify the types of cases and concerns for which the DST is responsible. If developed, it should be promoted throughout the Diocese and include appropriate signposting for cases that fall below the DST's threshold for response.

Recommendation D33: The MyConcern CMS dashboard should reflect a specific case owner for each open case as opposed the generic 'owning group.'

Recommendation D34: As part of the triage process, the DSA/O should record the rationale for risk grading and the prioritisation of cases, alongside specifying timescales for action and any review of progress.

Recommendation D35: All existing Safety Plans should:

- a) Be reviewed to ensure that they include a clause that encompasses contact with Church attendees outside of the Church setting and attendance at other churches / associated Church settings.
- b) Be signed by all relevant parties and action taken to ensure they are understood by the respondent.

Recommendation D36: The DST should review active Safety Plans to ensure that all associated files and records are updated on the case management system.

Recommendation D37: The DBF should provide training to all parishes on risk assessments and the development of effective strategies to manage any identified risk through Safety Plans.

Recommendation D38: The DBF should review whether two separate ISA's with the police are required.

Recommendation D39: The DBF should implement clear procedures for escalating differences of opinion regarding case management decisions.

Recommendation D40: The DBF should maintain consistent communication with victims and survivors, establishing agreed-upon check-in points and following up accordingly. Even if there are no new updates, the DBF should still communicate this to manage expectations and avoid overpromising. The frequency and method of communication should be determined in advance with the individuals involved, respecting their wishes.

Recommendation D41: The DBF should have appropriate succession planning in place to ensure contact with victims and survivors remains consistent. They could do this by:

- a) Continuing to maintain records appropriately.
- b) Ensuring there is a handover procedure in the instance of sickness, leave or absences in post.
- c) Informing the victim and survivor that there will be changes to their care.

Recommendation D42: To improve the handling of complex safeguarding cases that involve multiple agencies or jurisdictions, e.g., other dioceses, a dedicated Lead Safeguarding Liaison Officer should be appointed. This individual, agreed upon by the victim / survivor and all safeguarding representatives, will act as a central point of contact to ensure consistent communication and coordinated support.

Recommendation D43: To enhance the reach and impact of survivor engagement initiatives, the DBF should:

- a) Utilise existing channels such as parish newsletters, websites, social media platforms, and announcements during services to share information.
- b) Create materials such as posters for parish distribution, explaining the purpose of the focus group and how to participate.
- c) Equip local church officers to promote and communicate these opportunities and be able to answer any questions parishioners may have.

Recommendation D44: The DBF should use enhanced communication methods to clearly outline the support and resources available for victims and survivors. This could include, for example, explainer videos on the Victim and Survivor webpage to make information even more accessible and engaging.

Recommendation D45: The DBF should establish a formal mechanism for ongoing engagement with victims and survivors of abuse. This could include listening events throughout the Diocese and events could also be facilitated at Lincoln Cathedral.

Recommendation D46: The DBF should prioritise moving the information on 'further support resources' currently contained in a PDF directly onto the webpage.

To better understand the needs of victims and survivors using the website, the Diocese should analyse user journeys and website traffic data. This analysis will inform how the webpages should be restructured to provide a more user-friendly and supportive experience.

Recommendation D47: To enhance the visibility and accessibility of support resources for domestic and sexual abuse survivors, the DBF should:

- I. Ensure that contact information for support services related to domestic and sexual abuse are prominently displayed on the Diocesan website's homepage and other relevant sections.
- II. Signpost to 'Broken Rites' as an additional support resource for divorced and separated spouses and partners of clergy and recognised ministers.

Recommendation D48: The DBF should introduce theme-specific training modules focused on understanding the behaviour of offenders, particularly sexual predators. These modules should be accessible to relevant Church Officers across the DBF, Cathedral, and parishes.

Whilst overall responsibility for this lies with the NST, the DBF should seek to implement interim measures to address this contemporary safeguarding need.

Recommendation D49: The DBF should consider formalising access to clinical supervision and ensuring consistency in trauma-informed care for all members of the DST.

19 Appendix 2 – Cathedral Recommendations

Recommendation C1: The Cathedral should develop a defined action plan to monitor and support continuous improvement of its safeguarding culture. This could be implemented in overlapping phases.

- a) Implement / enhance monthly all-staff safeguarding briefings / meetings and quarterly cross-departmental manager briefings. Ensure meaningful agendas and targets are set. For example, aim for 80% average attendance and 75% positive feedback on meeting effectiveness (gathered via surveys or feedback forms).
- b) Develop a confidential staff feedback mechanism and set a specific date for its implementation (this is not the same as whistleblowing and should be easy to access either online or via a physical suggestion box or both). As an example, this could be launched three months after the Audit's publication with an accompanying awareness raising programme. Thereafter, the Cathedral could track the number of suggestions received and the time taken to address them. It could analyse feedback, identify themes and target key areas for improvement.
- c) Review and simplify all staff / volunteer policies and procedures within three months of the publication of the Audit. Set a target that 90% of staff find the revised policies clear and accessible (measured via anonymous staff / volunteer surveys).
- d) Engage an independent facilitator by September 2025 to conduct an updated cultural assessment and provide a report outlining evidence of impact, identification of residual issues and recommendations for next steps. The report should be completed by December 2025. Identify and track the implementation of key recommendations from this report via the SMC, with reports on progress to Chapter.
- e) Implement a formal staff recognition programme to publicly acknowledge the contributions of individuals and teams. This could include initiatives such as 'Safeguarding Champion of the month' awards, annual recognition events, or highlighting achievements via internal communications.

Recommendation C2: To ensure consistent leadership and effective management during this period of transition, the Cathedral should prioritise the appointment of a permanent Chief Operating Officer (COO).

Recommendation C3: The Dean, Cathedral Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the Chapter Cathedral Safeguarding Lead should collaborate with the Diocesan Bishop, Diocesan Safeguarding Officer/Advisor (DSO/A), and Cathedral Safeguarding Officer/Advisor (CSO/A) to develop a comprehensive safeguarding improvement plan. This plan should:

- a) Clearly articulate the Dean's vision for the Cathedral, including its role in the wider community and its commitment to spiritual growth and service, in the context of safeguarding.
- b) Emphasise the Cathedral's commitment to the wellbeing and inclusion of all clergy, staff and volunteers, fostering a supportive and respectful working environment.
- c) Outline the crucial role of the SLT in providing effective executive direction and operational management, particularly during this period of transition. Develop a succession plan for key leadership roles to ensure continuity and stability in the event of SLT changes, for example the CSL.
- d) Situate the plan within the context of collaboration with the DBF and incorporate relevant recommendations from this Audit.

Recommendation C4: The Cathedral should appoint an appropriately experienced independent non-executive with responsibility for safeguarding. The Audit is aware of this good practice in another Cathedral and the benefit it brings. This individual would ensure that there is no conflict of interest, and they would have the ability to bring fresh thinking and challenge to the meetings. Accepting this recommendation would mean the current Residentiary Canon, though no longer designated CSL, would remain a member of Chapter due to their role. This is seen as positive, preserving their valuable corporate memory.

Recommendation C5: A Safeguarding Management Subcommittee (SMC) of the Chapter should be established, operating with delegated authority, to provide detailed oversight of:

- a) The development and maintenance of safeguarding strategy, policy, and training.

- b) Strategic safeguarding risks and specific tasks, such as developing, delivering, and overseeing the safeguarding delivery plan (incorporating the role and function of the current Task Group).
- c) This sub-committee of Chapter should be configured by applying a skills, inclusion and diversity lens to the appointment of its members. A mix of executive and appropriate external representation along with the CSO/A (or in their absence DSO/A) and DSAP chair. This would ensure collaboration and a good line of sight across the diocese as well as expert input and challenge.
- d) The sub-committee could be chaired by the Non-Executive Independent member of Chapter.
- e) The sub-committee should meet quarterly or as developing needs demand.
- f) The chair of this group should also sit on the Audit / Risk Committee. This will ensure consistent information sharing regarding safeguarding risks and mitigation strategies.

Recommendation C6: A Safeguarding Operations Group (SOG) should be established. This group should:

- a) Be comprised of frontline staff / volunteers and appropriate and relevant DBF / parish representatives.
- b) Meet monthly to discuss and address operational safeguarding issues.
- c) Be chaired by the CSO/A.
- d) Report directly to the SLT, with the Chair providing regular updates and reports.
- e) This meeting would subsume and formalise the current CSO/A bi-monthly meetings.

Recommendation C7: To ensure effective governance and accountability, all Cathedral meetings (including Chapter, Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Safeguarding Management Committee (SMC), Safeguarding Operational Group (SOG), and any other safeguarding-

related meetings, whether impromptu or pre-organised) should adhere to the following protocols:

- a) **Pre-set Agendas:** Circulate a clear and concise agenda in advance of each meeting to ensure focused discussions and efficient use of time.
- b) **Accurate Minutes:** Record detailed and accurate minutes, capturing key discussions, decisions made, and action items assigned.
- c) **Action Tracking:** Monitor and report on the progress of agreed actions from previous meetings to ensure accountability and follow-through.

Recommendation C8: The Cathedral should develop and clearly communicate a document outlining the distinct roles and responsibilities of HR and safeguarding personnel, including a focus on areas where overlap may occur (e.g., recruitment, disciplinary procedures, staff wellbeing). In doing so, the following should be established:

- a) A clear referral pathway for any issues requiring clarification.
- b) A referral pathway to the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer/Advisor (CSO/A) for guidance.
- c) An escalation process. If agreement cannot be reached, escalate the issue to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) Chair for resolution.
- d) Reinforce safer recruitment responsibilities, i.e., reiterate that safer recruitment is primarily an HR function, with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer/Advisor (DSO/A) or CSO/A becoming involved only when a potential safeguarding concern is identified during the recruitment process (e.g., a DBS check reveals a caution, conviction or other legitimate concern).

Recommendation C9: The current CSO should be fully embedded as a CSA (given they will be line managed by the DSO/A) and part of the DST. This will deliver a consolidated resource, a uniform approach to safeguarding policy and practice and the ability to flex when additional support is required.

Recommendation C10: The current MOU (2021) should be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

Recommendation C11: Child-friendly safeguarding posters should be introduced in the Song School, featuring photos of key staff and clear reminders of safeguarding procedures.

Recommendation C12: Chaperones should receive training on road safety in line with standards used in UK schools.

Recommendation C13: A formalised low-level concerns log should be implemented as part of daily practice, allowing for patterns of behaviour to be tracked and shared with schools at regular intervals. Care must be taken to ensure that access to these logs is appropriately restricted to safeguard privacy.

Recommendation C14: The Safeguarding Choristers Policy should be revised to include a detailed section on the use of restraint. This should outline when restraint may be necessary, clearly defining the rare circumstances under which restraint might be justified, emphasising its use as a last resort to prevent harm. It should provide detailed instructions on safe and approved techniques to minimise physical and emotional risk. Additionally, it should specify the steps to be taken following the use of restraint, including documentation, communication with parents, and reflective learning for staff.

Recommendation C15: The Cathedral should review the functions of volunteers and other roles where a DBS check is currently not undertaken, including Education Volunteers to ensure they follow contemporary Government guidance. For each role, the Cathedral should establish whether a check is necessary and at what level. To note, a basic check can be undertaken for any position or purpose.

Recommendation C16: The Cathedral should conduct regular surveys or feedback sessions with staff and volunteers to assess the effectiveness of safeguarding communication channels and identify any gaps or areas for improvement.

Recommendation C17: To improve safeguarding communication with volunteers and ensure messages reach a wider audience, the Cathedral should implement an approach that combines the existing system with more direct methods such as a dedicated mailing list for volunteer updates, announcements, and general information.

Recommendation C18: The Cathedral should develop a communication plan aligned with its safeguarding communication strategy, which aims to embed key safeguarding messages throughout its online and digital channels. Consideration should be given to understanding the needs of followers, adopting different techniques specific to the platform in use and utilisation of relevant awareness days, campaigns and events to amplify the message.

Recommendation C19: The Cathedral should review the arrangements it has in place to capture the voices and experiences of children, vulnerable adults and victims and survivors. It should develop a defined engagement plan that ensures stakeholders are identified, spoken to frequently, and that their views are routinely reported to Chapter and relevant committees. The plan should also include arrangements for how such voices influence contemporary practice and new initiatives.

Recommendation C20: The Cathedral should establish a clear policy outlining the scope of CCTV coverage, monitoring arrangements, and access protocols. This policy should specify:

- a) Areas covered by CCTV: Clearly define the areas monitored by CCTV.
- b) Monitoring procedures: Detail how the CCTV system is monitored and by whom.

- c) Access to footage: Define who has access to CCTV footage and under what circumstances.
- d) Recording and retention: Specify recording practices and how long footage is retained.
- e) The prominent placement of warning notices to alert people that CCTV is in use: These notices should clearly state the purpose of the CCTV system and include a contact number for individuals to call if they require further details about the system, its operation, or their rights regarding their data.

Recommendation C21: To further strengthen the Risk Register, it should be expanded to include a comprehensive assessment of safeguarding risks specific to the Cathedral's context and environment. This should include specific safeguarding focused consideration of:

- a) Risks arising from allegations of abuse or misconduct, mishandling of safeguarding cases, or negative publicity. This should include protocols for managing allegations, proactively searching for and addressing (open source) online criticism and media relations.
- b) Risks associated with the cost-of-living crisis, such as increased vulnerability to exploitation and abuse due to financial hardship. This could involve strategies to support vulnerable individuals and families and to prevent financial abuse.
- c) Risks associated with specific activities, such as youth groups, choir practices, or volunteer programmes. This should involve tailored risk assessments and safeguarding measures for each activity.
- d) Risks related to the security of the Cathedral building and its environs and the safety of visitors, staff, and volunteers, including lone working policies, security procedures, and emergency response plans.
- e) Risks associated with data breaches, online harassment, and reputational damage through social media or other online material. This should include measures to protect sensitive data and manage the Cathedral's online presence.

Recommendation C22: In partnership with the DST, the Cathedral should proactively engage with its workforce to promote confidence in reporting and escalating concerns.

Recommendation C23: To ensure the highest level of safety, the Cathedral should:

- a) Collaborate with the DST and thoroughly review its existing Safety Plans against national CofE practice guidance.
- b) Re-examine the current Safety Plan, to address:
 - I. Conflicting risk assessments: Ensure that assessments do not contain contradictions.
 - II. The lack of clarity in risk analysis: Ensure that risk analysis is appropriately detailed and specific.
 - III. The overly optimistic view of risk prevention: Ensure that assessments are not overoptimistic. For example, suggesting risks can be entirely eliminated.

Recommendation C24: The Cathedral should standardise its use of the NSCMS to align with the DST's practice, while adhering to national guiding principles. See also Recommendation D18.

Recommendation C25: Volunteers should be provided with a Cathedral email address for the purpose of communicating with others and sharing information about Cathedral / work related issues.

Recommendation C26: The Cathedral should partner with the DSAP as it develops an initiative to create opportunities for the Church to listen to, engage with and respond to victims and survivors (see also Recommendation D9).

Recommendation C27: The Cathedral should prioritise increasing compliance rates across all training levels by implementing reminders and targeted support for those overdue.

Recommendation C28: The Memorandum of Understanding should be revisited to confirm its continued relevance and to refocus efforts on the provision of training for Cathedral staff.

Recommendation C29: The Cathedral should work with the DST to introduce theme-specific training modules focused on understanding the behaviour of offenders, particularly sexual predators. These modules should be accessible to relevant individuals within the Cathedral.

20 Appendix 3 – Glossary of Abbreviations

ADSA	Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser
ALM	Authorised Lay Minister
CCSL	Clergy Current Status Letter
CCTV	Closed-circuit TV
CDM	Clergy Discipline Measure
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CofE	Church of England
COO	Chief Operating Officer
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CSA	Cathedral Safeguarding Advisor
CSL	Cathedral Safeguarding Lead
CSO	Cathedral Safeguarding Officer
CYF	Children, Youth and Family
DBF	Diocesan Board of Finance
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DSA	Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor
DSAP	Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
DSO	Diocesan Safeguarding Officer
DST	Diocesan Safeguarding Team
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HR	Human Resources
IICSA	The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse
ISA	Information Sharing Agreement
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
LLR	Learning Lessons Reviews

LMP	Local Mission Partnerships
LSAB	Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board
LSCP	Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership
MDR	Ministerial Development Review
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NSCMS	National Safeguarding Case Management System
NST	National Safeguarding Team
PCC	Parochial Church Council
PCR2	Past Cases Review 2
PSO	Parish Safeguarding Officer
PTO	Permission to Officiate
SCA	Safer Church Agreements
SCIE	The Social Care Institute for Excellence
SCMG	Safeguarding Case Management Groups
SIR	Serious Incident Report
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SMG	Safeguarding Management Group
SOG	Safeguarding Operational Group
SRMP	Safeguarding Review and Management Plan
SRPM	Safer Recruitment and People Management



©Ineqe Group Ltd 2025

Date of Publication: 17/02/25

Version: 1.2

Address: INEQE Group Ltd, 13 Edgewater Road, Belfast, BT3 9JQ, N. Ireland

Telephone: +44 (0) 2890 232 060

Website: www.ineqe.com

