

PAST CASES REVIEW 2: AN OVERVIEW OF THE DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER'S INDEPENDENT REPORT

The Past Cases Review 2 (PCR2) is a comprehensive safeguarding review that has been undertaken nationally across the Church of England.

It is the second such national church review that has taken place – the first was carried out between 2008 and 2009 (PCR1).

In this document we provide an overview of the Diocese's independent report which contributed to the national PCR2 Report. You can find sections on:

- Background and context
- Purpose and process
- Scope of the Review
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Background and context

As part of the PCR 2 process, the Diocese of Rochester has undertaken an independent safeguarding review across all its churches and key institutions.

PCR2 was launched nationally by the Church of England in the summer of 2019. It came about after independent scrutiny of the original Past Cases Review of 2008 and 2009 considered that this process had not been carried out thoroughly enough.

Rochester Diocese was one of seven dioceses particularly identified as having undertaken a sub-standard PCR. Because of this, when undertaking PCR2, the Diocese was required to review all files that were within the scope of the original PCR, as well as those within the scope of PCR2.

The PCR2 process began in this Diocese in late 2019. It was completed in autumn 2021, with the submission of our independent review to the National PCR2 Project Management Board.

Purpose and process

The purpose of the Diocesan review was to identify and scrutinise any written records - electronic or written - which may contain information about, or allegations of, abuse and neglect (including spiritual and domestic abuse), against children or adults.

This was to ensure that once it was complete, we could be confident that:

- All allegations of abuse against children and adults had been dealt with appropriately and proportionately to the level of risk identified, and to the modern standard expected by the Diocese and national Church.
- The support needs of known victims and survivors had been considered.
- All safeguarding allegations had been referred to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA) and had been responded to in line with the current safeguarding practice guidance. ([House of Bishops Safeguarding Policy Promoting a safe Church \(2017\)](#)).
- Relevant cases had been referred to the statutory agencies.

Scope of the review

To fulfil its purpose, the following information was included within the scope of the review:

- All clergy personal files (known as Blue files) and the equivalent personal files of diocesan staff and other lay ministers, whether or not the clergy, lay minister, employee, volunteer was engaged in ministry, paid or voluntary work at the time of the review.

This included:

- Current and deceased Clergy
 - Those with Permission to Officiate, (PTO) and those applying for PTO
 - Retired Clergy
 - Licensed to Officiate
 - Licensed Lay Ministers
 - Ordinands, those applying to be ordained
 - Other Diocesan staff.
- Archived general parish files held at Bishops court (the Bishop of Rochester's Office)
 - Paperwork/files from the office of Bishop Brian Castle, the former Bishop of Tonbridge

The institutions and organisations included as part of the review were:

- The Rochester Diocesan Office
- Bishops court – the Bishop of Rochester's Office
- Rochester Cathedral
- Malling Abbey - a community of Anglican Benedictine nuns.
- All parishes and Bishops Mission Orders within the area of the Diocese of Rochester – which covers Medway, north and west Kent, and the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley

Parishes were required to identify all current and non-recent safeguarding concerns and to identify any cases that they felt had not been dealt with appropriately.

To allow as much opportunity as possible for any previously unknown information to come to light, parishes were also encouraged to publish details of the review in notices, pew sheets, websites and wherever they felt appropriate.

Additionally, twelve para-organisations were contacted, in case they held information or had knowledge of a safeguarding concern. These included organisations such as night shelters or food banks, not necessarily run by the church but associated with the church.

The reviewers

Three independent reviewers were commissioned to carry out the Review and to compile a report for submission to the national team.

- Tim Bonnett - Tim is a retired police officer, Independent Safeguarding Consultant, CB Safeguarding Manager and lead Safeguarding Adviser for Hertfordshire RFU.
- Elaine Rabbitt - Elaine is a retired police officer; as a serving police officer specialised in the investigation of serious sexual offences, safeguarding of children and adults. On retirement was lead investigator for complaints concerning young person's safeguarding for the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, currently holds a lead safeguarding role within school governance.
- Chris Watts - Chris is a retired police officer, and is an experienced investigator having served with the police and Serious Organised Crime Agency, was lead independent investigator for offences concerning young person's safeguarding for the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency.

Contribution of victims and survivors

We are particularly grateful to those victims, survivors and their advocates who helped contribute to the work of the Review.

Whether this was in sharing with the reviewers their experience of how the Diocese had engaged with them, or in helping shape how information about the Review was communicated to ensure as wide an engagement as possible, particularly with potentially previously unknown victims and survivors.

We are indebted to them for the generosity of their time, wisdom and experience.

"I express my gratitude to all those who have contributed locally here in this Diocese to the Past Cases Review 2 process, and particularly to those victims and survivors who have so generously shared their stories, insights and experiences with us."

(Bishop Simon Burton-Jones, Bishop of Tonbridge)

If you have a lived experience of abuse, there is help and support available. Please visit our [Safeguarding pages](#) for more information.

Key findings

On completion of the Review:

- **3,796 written and electronic files/records*** were reviewed, as set out within the scope of the original PCR and PCR2 process.

** A file is defined here as anything from a personal file (for example, a file relating to a member of clergy or paid member of staff), to a piece of paper that included information that may have had some relevance to or be in relation to safeguarding. This figure includes all safeguarding files held by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.*

- **100% of parishes returned declarations**
- **One new case ** was identified from the parish returns** – this led to a referral to the police and an investigation by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

***A new case is defined as any information identified through the PCR2 process pertaining to an individual or a concern that was previously unknown by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.*

- **Thirty-six files were identified as requiring further work by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team** to bring the file up to the required modern standard of safeguarding practice, and to enable the file to be closed. In each of these files, the reviewers subsequently agreed that all actions had been taken and that the case could be closed.

Recommendations

The independent reviewers highlighted six areas in which they were able to identify recommendations to further improve the Diocese's safeguarding processes and systems.

1. Administration of records and files

While overall there is good practice in terms of the maintenance of personnel files, there would be benefit in introducing protocols around file management which allow for quick identification of when safeguarding information is held within a file, and easier access to required information such as: date of DBS and safeguarding training renewal, Permission To Officiate (PTO) renewal, any records relating to complaints.

ACTION

All files now have a cross referencing system to easily identify if there is a safeguarding concern recorded by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

2. Resourcing of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team

There is a significant amount of work for the Safeguarding Team to do and consideration should be given to the amount of resource given to this area of work.

ACTION:

Since the review took place, the team has expanded and now consists of:

- A lead Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (0.8)
- Two Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers (one full time and the other 0.8)
- A Safeguarding Trainer (0.6)
- A Safeguarding Administrator (0.7).

The resource for safeguarding is reviewed annually.

3. Survivor Engagement

The survivor engagement policy should be re-visited and updated. Consideration should be given for parishes to use Parish Safeguarding Officers from another area in cases where a conflict of interest is apparent.

ACTION:

The survivor/victim engagement policy has been revised in light of this Review, and in light of the new national guidance entitled, [Responding Well to Victims and Survivors](#).

Direct work is also taking place with individual survivors, as well as with [Survivors Voices](#), with a view to using their lived experience to develop our safeguarding response.

Potential conflict of interest is considered throughout all investigations to ensure that those making decisions remain objective.

4. **Investigations:**

Consideration to be given to developing training and processes to ensure the correct recording on the case management system of investigations, including information such as:

- a. detailing complaint/victims/respondents' details
- b. chronology
- c. core group minutes
- d. decisions
- e. referrals to statutory agencies.

Consideration be given to adopting a formal process for the closure of cases.

In complex cases consideration for a second opinion/review.

ACTION:

Both Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers case records are supervised and closed by the Lead Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser. Internal checklists, templates and guidance for conducting investigations have been developed to assist accurate record keeping.

As part of the transfer of data to the new National Case Management System, all records will be subject to checking and updating where necessary.

5. **Partner organisations:**

Develop clear protocols for the arrangements of organisations engaging chaplains to disclose information to the Diocese of any safeguarding concerns or behaviour complaints.

ACTION:

This piece of work is ongoing – there are good relationships with the partner organisations that deploy chaplains.

6. **Clergy Ministerial Development Reviews (CMDR):**

Currently there is no alignment of the Clergy review process with any issues relating to safeguarding, misconduct, and behaviour.

Consideration should be given to a process for recognising any training requirements, support or development.

ACTION:

The CMDR process is currently being reviewed by the Bishop's Leadership Team and this recommendation will be considered as part of that review.

Highlighting good practice

The reviewers also recognised areas where there was good practice.

Quality of work:

It was clear to the Independent Reviewers that the quality of the work carried out now and in recent years has vastly improved, and staff should be credited for the turnaround.

Effective links:

They recognised the good links the safeguarding team has with the statutory agencies and there was particular commendation of the Lead DSA who sets a high standard for the investigation of all safeguarding referrals, and the development of the safeguarding team.

Commenting on the Review, the Independent Reviewers said:

"We are satisfied that the Diocese of Rochester has fulfilled the objectives set out by the Protocol and Practice Guidance for PCR2. The Diocese has been thorough in identifying all information held within the parishes, the Cathedral, the Diocese and other church bodies for review.

"We have reviewed all the information and are assured that all allegations of abuse of children and adults have been handled appropriately and proportionately to the level of risk required.

"We have been assured that, in the cases where a survivor has been identified, the support needs of that survivor have been considered.

"We are assured that the DSA is aware of all allegations of safeguarding and that those meeting the thresholds have been referred to the statutory agencies."

Our ongoing safeguarding journey

We know we are on a journey, and we have learned valuable lessons from this Review.

However, we know this is just part of the journey, which must include reflection on the national report and how its findings may help inform our safeguarding practice and provision going forward, particularly in how we respond to victims and survivors.

Dr Liza Thompson, the independent Chair of the Diocese of Rochester's Safeguarding Advisory Panel, a group of external safeguarding professionals, who along with senior clergy and officers from the Diocese and the Cathedral, provide quality assurance and challenge in regard to safeguarding, says:

"While I am encouraged by the Independent Reviewers' acknowledgement that there has been significant progress within the Diocese around the culture and management of safeguarding, there is still much to do.

"I will continue to hold the Diocese of Rochester to account to ensure that the recommendations of the Reviewers, and particularly the Diocese's strategy for supporting victims and survivors, is carried out and scrutinised.

Victims and survivors have been let down too many times and we need to see action and movement."

In a video message, she also makes a personal invitation to anyone with a lived experience of abuse who would like to help shape and improve the Diocese's response to victims and survivors:

[Find a link to the video here](#)

Support for victims and survivors of abuse

Anyone who has been affected by abuse within a church context now or in the past, is encouraged to please come forward.

There is help and support available and you will be taken seriously

Please visit the safeguarding pages of the Diocese of Rochester website for details of how to get help: www.rochester.anglican.org/safeguarding/i-am-a-victim-survivor/