



Diocese in Europe

Past Cases Review 2

Executive Summary

Review Conducted by DPR Consulting commissioned by the Diocese in Europe

Lead Independent Reviewer – Pam Rowe

Final report presented to Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Committee – May 5 2023

Executive Summary Published – May 17 2023



Safeguarding Past Cases Review 2 – Executive Summary_May 17 2023

The Church of England published the national report on the Safeguarding Past Cases Review 2019 (PCR2) in October 2022. That report can be found here [CofE PCR2 report](#). The Diocese in Europe finished its work later than other dioceses due to Covid -19 travel restrictions which prevented reviewers from working in Brussels. The work is now complete and what follows is a summary of the report delivered to the Bishop in Europe, the Rt Revd Dr Robert Innes, by the independent reviewers.

As a result of this review, it is possible to confirm that all the objectives of PCR2 have been met in the Diocese in Europe. The stated objectives were that:

‘At the completion of the review process, it will be possible to state that:

- All known safeguarding cases have been appropriately managed and reported to statutory agencies or the police where appropriate
- That the needs of any known victims have been considered and that sources of support have been identified and offered where this is appropriate
- That all identified risks have been assessed and mitigated as far as is reasonably possible.’

Anyone with a safeguarding concern can contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team at Europe.safeguarding@churchofengland.org. Confidential support is available at safespaces@firstlight.org.uk for victims and survivors of abuse or any safeguarding matter

Receiving the report on behalf of the Diocese Bishop Robert wrote:

‘I know the lifelong impact that abuse has on victims and survivors. I apologise unreservedly to anyone who has suffered harm in any Diocese in Europe chaplaincy, or indeed anywhere in the Church of England.

Reviews like this one are valuable as we continue to learn how to improve our safeguarding activities in our diocese and across the church. The independent reviewers have created a thorough, helpful and clear report. Their review is testimony to the significance and importance of safeguarding work in this diocese. I am reassured that they found no cases we didn’t already know about that are in need of attention. But we cannot be complacent, and I fully endorse all the findings and recommendations of this Past Cases Review 2 for the Diocese in Europe. We are committed to working on the recommendations from the review. This work is an integral part of our continued dedication to improved safeguarding practices, training and culture across our diocese.

We want to continue to make our chaplaincies the safest places possible for everyone. Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility. We are now better aware than ever of areas where we can improve and also aspects which are working well which we should continue and build upon.

I am pleased to note the increased actions we are taking in supporting victims and survivors in the diocese.

In the largest diocese in the Church of England, spread over 40 jurisdictions, this was a complex task which has been completed with integrity, insight, and careful attention to all the detail. I want to express my thanks to the independent reviewers for their excellent work and my gratitude to the diocesan safeguarding team who have supported this process over a prolonged period.’

When the Church of England published its report on the reviews of the dioceses in England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby said:

'Our aspiration is for a church where children, young people and the vulnerable can worship, learn, socialise and develop in a safe and caring environment, with the knowledge they have a voice and can confidently raise concerns. We sincerely apologise for our failures and want to reach out to those who are still suffering from the pain and misery they endured. We extend this apology to wider family members affected from this past abuse. We are so sorry that this ever happened. It was not your fault and you are not to blame. We should have been better at listening and responding to survivors' and victims' concerns. Our faith compels us to take safeguarding with the utmost seriousness; to prevent abuse from occurring; responding appropriately where it has in support of our undertaking to making church communities and institutions safer places.'

The lead reviewer for the Diocese in Europe Pam Rowe said of her report:

'Our independence brought fresh eyes to historical and current information on files in the diocese. Prompt response to the recommendations has shown a determination to have a safeguarding culture continuously supported by transparent systems.'

Di Smith, the Independent Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Committee (DSAC) for the Diocese in Europe welcomed the review:

'As Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Committee (DSAC) I welcome the findings of the Past Cases Review 2. The role of DSAC is to ensure that the Church is a safe place for everyone to come and worship and ensuring a thorough approach to PCR2 has been an important part of our work over the past three years. The review has been undertaken by independent safeguarding experts and we are grateful for their diligence, objectivity and professionalism. Their recommendations will be used to support the work of DSAC and the Diocesan Safeguarding Team in our shared commitment to ensuring continuous improvement in the development of safeguarding culture, policy and working practices across the Diocese in Europe.'

Introduction

The Church of England began the Past Cases Review 2 (PCR2) in 2019.

This comprehensive review looked at all complaints made against clergy and church officers relating to children and vulnerable adults. This followed the first Past Cases Review (2007-2009) which focused solely on clergy and only on complaints regarding children.

All 42 dioceses in the Church of England undertook this PCR2 review and the main report summarising the recommendations nationally was published in October 2022. The remit for the work and the outcomes in England can be found here: [Past Cases Review 2 - National Report.pdf \(churchofengland.org\)](#) The process in Europe took longer than in other dioceses due to Covid travel restrictions.

Review process in the Diocese in Europe

The review was conducted in a thorough and detailed manner. Firstly, all files were reviewed to establish whether there was information to suggest a safeguarding concern, and if so to review the adequacy of the response. These included all files on licenced clergy, ordinands, clergy with permission to officiate (PTO), and Readers. Files are held in London and Brussels. Some additional information is held by chaplaincies.

A team of experienced safeguarding experts undertook the review over 2 years. The Diocesan Safeguarding Team and other senior staff supported the process and responded to queries raised.

Outcome of the review

At the completion of the review process, it is possible to state that the objectives set by the Archbishops' Council for the project have been met in the Diocese in Europe; namely:

- All known safeguarding cases have been appropriately managed and reported to statutory agencies or the police where appropriate
- That the needs of any known victims have been considered and that sources of support have been identified and offered where this is appropriate
- That all identified risks have been assessed and mitigated as far as is reasonably possible

In addition, with particular reference to historic cases the lead reviewer emphasised the need for tighter investigative processes, a systematic approach for victim engagement and clear recording of outcomes.

Reviewers emphasised the need for continuous work on safeguarding culture across the diocese to build on the achievements in this area in recent years.

The report makes a series of recommendations (outlined below). These focus on:

- The administration and management of the diocese's safeguarding and HR data
- Ways to further improve the culture around safeguarding

The implementation process for all the recommendations has already started.

Governance and process

In line with Phase 1 in the [PCR2 Protocol and Practice Guidance](#) the Diocese in Europe established a PCR2 Reference Group to support the work of PCR2 and manage any issues that emerged from the review. This group was independently chaired by Di Smith, an experienced safeguarding expert, chair, and improvement consultant who has served as a Director of Children's Services in four local authorities. Victims and survivors were represented in this group.

The diocese commissioned an external independent company (DPR Consulting Services Limited) to conduct the review. This method of delivery was chosen to ensure independence and to complete the work most efficiently and effectively.

Scope and files

2477 files were in scope to be reviewed. Almost all of these files are general personnel and correspondence files. The majority (2227 - 90%) were paper files containing historical and some current information. There were also 28 safeguarding paper files. A further 250 safeguarding cases were held electronically (73 were currently known and 177 were legacy cases). In preparation for the review, all chaplaincies were contacted and asked to submit any safeguarding concerns held in their records. 100% of the chaplaincies responded to this request.

Following the review of all the files, a comprehensive exercise was undertaken as each potential concern was further examined. This work, by the lead independent reviewer, confirmed that there was evidence of all appropriate action having been taken.

Recent safeguarding understanding and processes have developed which made the process of investigation easier with recent cases than with historical information which was kept in a less ordered manner.

The Lead Independent Reviewer examined the new system established by the DSA to ensure the completion of actions on the electronic files.

The review endorsed the movement of all safeguarding records from the legacy platform CPOMS to the new national system 'My Concern'.

Findings from review

No files reviewed revealed any requirement for urgent action.

From the total of 2477 files reviewed, 58 (2.3%) required further information to establish whether they were current or historical safeguarding concerns and, whether the work to close the case appropriately had been evidenced.

Extensive work was completed to ensure that closure of cases or files was clearly explained and included for clarity and transparency.

A further 215 were flagged to confirm that full safeguarding training or checks had been completed. This was not clear from the paper files but was verified by the electronic records.

Themes and recommendations

The findings and conclusions of the national review were wide-ranging.

The national PCR2 report [CofE national PCR2](#) was published in October 2022. That report summarised the key findings into eleven themes:

1. Survivors and Victims
2. Managing those who pose a risk
3. Managing risk
4. Case management
5. Managing information
6. Safeguarding teams
7. Safer recruitment
8. Support and accountability
9. Learning and development
10. Strategy, leadership and governance
11. Culture

The reviewers found that these themes (in England) are strongly aligned to the outcome in the Diocese in Europe.

The specific findings and recommendations of the review in Europe can be summarised into the following key themes:

Information management

- Enhance the information management of safeguarding information. This is being addressed by the recent new national electronic system – My Concern.
- Improve the consistency of HR paper file management and ensure that cross-referencing with electronic files is standardised.
- Files should include timelines and key themes should be gathered for safeguarding training.
- On historical cases and some more recent cases there is a need to record outcomes better and tighten investigative processes.

Victims and Survivors

- Victim and survivor engagement has improved across the long period covered by the report. The review endorses broader promotion of available support provided by Safe Spaces. (Details of that service are here [Safe Spaces information](#))
- The diocese should ensure that support is also available to those reporting and investigating safeguarding concerns as well as the victims and survivors themselves
- In historical cases, there is a need to be more systematic about the role of victims in investigations.

Learning and Development

- As the safeguarding concerns mainly relate to sexual abuse, there should be a priority focus to include training, and a broad range of communications across the diocese to raise awareness in this area.

Culture and Language

- Continuous attention is needed to have a culture where there is evidence of the priority given to safeguarding. The language used in all files and communications should be careful to ensure that euphemisms are not used and do not blur serious allegations. This issue was more evident in historical records but should be addressed in all training and communications.

Implementation of recommendations

Since the review began, many of the recommendations have already been implemented by the safeguarding team and key staff in the diocese.

Key actions undertaken include:

- The establishment of an independent victim and survivor group (Eden voice) to ensure that support for victims and survivors is readily available and their voices heard.
- The diocese is in the first group of dioceses across the Church of England implementing the new national safeguarding system 'My Concern'.
- The information management of clergy 'blue files' has been reviewed and improved.
- The range of safeguarding communications has been extended including regular conferences and seminars for safeguarding officers and other leaders in chaplaincies across the diocese.

The Diocese in Europe has drawn up plans to address the recommendations. These will be further developed by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and the senior staff. Progress will be monitored by the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Committee. The Diocesan Synod receives a safeguarding report each year which will reflect this work.

The Diocesan Head of Safeguarding, Grace Fagan-Stewart said

'I am pleased to receive this report and value its recommendations. It will make a significant contribution to the work of our team and towards the mission of the church across Europe. This review has been helpful by contributing to identifying areas where we can improve practice and promote safeguarding within the Diocese in Europe. I want to extend my thanks to the members of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team who fully engaged with the process.'

Appendix - The Commissioned Company

DPR Consulting is a company consisting of experienced safeguarding experts. The safeguarding experience of the independent review team averaged 30 years. The company director who was the lead reviewer is an ex-inspector of safeguarding services and a senior manager. She had conducted a range of reviews of statutory services in both local and national government.