

# St Albans Past Cases Review 2

## Executive Summary

**5 October 2022**

### Foreword

The Past Cases Review 2 (PCR2) was launched by the Church of England in 2019, as part of the Church's commitment to improving the way in which we respond to safeguarding allegations and concerns. The aim of this national initiative has been to identify and review all information held by churches about alleged abuse of children or vulnerable adults and to ensure that all allegations have been handled appropriately.

The Diocese of St Albans has been fully committed to this process and, following an extensive study of records and reports, the independent reviewers have submitted a detailed report setting out their findings and recommendations. This Executive Summary explains the way in which the review has been carried out and highlights the main conclusions.

The report concludes that the review has met its objectives and that, as far as practicable, all allegations of abuse of children or adults recorded or identified have been dealt with appropriately. Those cases which required further consideration have been resolved satisfactorily.

The reviewers have commended the diocesan safeguarding team and noted evidence of excellent working practices in the diocese. At the same time, they consider that there are some areas for improvement at local and national level and have made a number of recommendations, particularly on resources and record-keeping.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel and senior clergy have carefully considered the report and action has been taken to address the recommendations. We recognise that we have a continuing responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of children and vulnerable adults in our churches and the report provides an important resource for the diocese as we strive to maintain and develop best practice.

Finally we wish to express our gratitude to the independent reviewers for their detailed analysis and report and to all those who have contributed to the review for their assistance and support.

**Philip Waller**  
**Independent Chair, Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel**



# From the Bishop of St Albans

The Diocese of St Albans is committed to offering a warm and safe welcome to everyone who attends our churches, especially to children and vulnerable adults.

This is integral to our vision to be a place where people discover and deepen their sense of God's love for them and are drawn to join in prayer, worship and the life of the church.

The Diocese of St Albans has adopted the national policies and Practice Guidance for Safeguarding within the Church of England and commended them to the deaneries and parishes for adoption and implementation.

This Past Cases Review has been an important step in ensuring that all known cases of concern about the behaviour of clergy and church officers towards children and vulnerable adults have been dealt with appropriately.

Safeguarding is not just a matter of words. Where things go wrong, we put survivors first, strive to care for those who have been harmed and follow best practice, working with all statutory and other authorities to deal effectively with harm and to learn the lessons from every situation that will make our church and our world a safer place for all.

**The Rt Revd Dr Alan Smith**  
**Bishop of St Albans**

## Introduction

The Past Cases Review (PCR2) was commissioned by the Archbishops' Council with the support of the National Safeguarding Steering Group. It is the most comprehensive review of personnel files ever undertaken. On 1 September 2019, the PCR2 Management Board published practice guidance and background presentation to assist dioceses in the conduct of this review. All dioceses were committed to completing this review.

The Protocol and Practice Guidance made clear that the wellbeing of victims and survivors must be central to this work and that dioceses would need to ensure their voices can be heard. It was recognised that for some victims and survivors it would be important to speak to people outside the structures of the Church, and an independent helpline was set up, operated by the NSPCC.

This review is part of the Church's overall commitment to improving the way in which we respond to allegations and concerns.

PCR2 came about from the recommendations from the report of the Independent Scrutiny Team and was written to capture the lessons learned across different dioceses during the decade since the Church's original Past Case Review (PCR1).

The overall purpose of the review is to identify both good practice and institutional failings in relation to how allegations of abuse have been handled, and to provide recommendations to the Church of England that will lead to improvements in its response to allegations of abuse and in its overall safeguarding working practices; thereby ensuring a safer environment for all.

In practical terms, PCR2 is a comprehensive audit of all employee and clergy files to ensure that they are independently reviewed and any cases of concern which emerge are dealt with by the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser as if they are new referrals. It also examined cases of concern already known to the Diocese and subsequently reported by parishes requested as part of this review. The

examination of files was undertaken by a team of two independent reviewers, who concluded their work in November 2021.

Full information about the history, scope, and national findings of PCR2 is available on the [Church of England website](#).

## Objectives

The objectives of PCR2 are:

- To identify all information held within parishes, cathedrals, dioceses or other church bodies, which may contain allegations of abuse or neglect where the alleged perpetrator is a clergy person or other church officer and ensure these cases have been independently reviewed
- To ensure all allegations of abuse of children, especially those that have been recorded since the original PCR, have been handled appropriately and proportionately to the level of risk identified and with the paramountcy principle evidenced within decision making
- To ensure that recorded incidents or allegations of abuse of an adult (including domestic abuse) have been handled appropriately demonstrating the principles of adult safeguarding.
- To ensure that the support needs of known survivors have been considered
- To ensure that all safeguarding allegations have been referred to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers and are being/have been responded to in line with current safeguarding practice guidance
- To ensure that cases meeting the relevant thresholds have been referred to statutory agencies.

This practice guidance was written with reference to current House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy Promoting a Safer Church (2017) and cases identified that required action, dealt with in accordance with the relevant House of Bishops Practice Guidance.

## Files in the Scope of PCR2

- All clergy blue files and the equivalent personnel files of diocesan staff, readers and other lay ministers and (where they exist) the files of other church officers, which were not reviewed as part of the original PCR and where the individuals are required to have substantial contact with children, within their church roles
- All clergy blue files and the equivalent personnel files of diocesan staff, readers and other lay ministers and (where they exist) the files of other church officers, where these individuals are required to have direct contact with adults at risk of abuse as part of their church role and: where those files have not been previously reviewed with a focus on identifying incidents of abuse of adults, including domestic abuse.

Particular attention was paid to identifying and reviewing:

- The files of those individuals whose behaviour has been identified as potentially posing a risk to children whose file/information was not considered as part of the original PCR or whose behaviour has become of concern since the original PCR
- Files relating to any clergy, lay minister, diocesan staff or church officer whose behaviour has been identified as being potentially harmful or abusive to adults including domestic abuse which is not caught by the above three categories.

# PCR Reference Group

In compliance with the PCR2 Protocol and Practice Guidance, a reference group was commissioned by the Diocese prior to the review taking place.

The Independent Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Panel (DSAP) took the role of Independent Chair for the PCR2 Reference Group.

The group further consisted of:

- Lead Safeguarding Bishop for St Albans
- Diocesan Communications Officer
- Survivor Advocate
- DSAP member and former Head of Child Protection, Hertfordshire CC
- Independent Chair of Hertfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board
- Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board Business Manager
- Diocesan Secretary.

The membership met the criteria of the PCR2.

The purpose of the reference group was to:

- Ensure robust risk management
- Provide dispute resolution when there are differing professional opinions between the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) and the independent reviewer
- Ensure that the right care and support is in place for anyone that is impacted upon by the undertaking of this review
- Review the recommendations from the DSA regarding the exemption of a proportion of previously reviewed cases/files and ensure that agreement to seek exemptions is unanimous.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser reported to the PCR2 Reference Group. PCR2 was a standing item on the DSAP agenda.

## Survivor Strategy

St Albans Diocese formulated a Survivor Care Strategy in preparation of the review and appointed a Survivor Advocate who was suitably qualified and experienced in survivor care.

The strategy is reproduced here.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 PCR2 is a central part of the Church's proactive approach to identifying where abuse allegations have not been managed appropriately or safely or with the needs of the vulnerable at the centre of its decision making. **The welfare of children or of adults at risk of abuse must be of paramount importance in the planning and execution of PCR2.**
- 1.2 The Diocese of St Albans is responding to the Past Case Review 2 (PCR2) guidance and the requirement to appoint a PCR advocate to provide the lead for survivor care, support and engagement.

- 1.3 Local Adult and Children's Safeguarding Partnership Board Managers and police leads for the three local authority areas have been notified that the PCR is taking place and have been provided with a copy of the Protocol and Practice Guidance for information.
- 1.4 A dedicated telephone helpline operated, independently from the church, by the NSPCC, has been set up for those affected by issues which may arise as a result of PCR2. This information is on the National Safeguarding Team's website. The telephone helpline number and details of how to make contact directly with the diocesan safeguarding team has been promoted locally by the Diocese.
- 1.5 This strategy should be read alongside 'Responding Well to those who have been Sexually Abused Practice Guidance' (2011).

## **2 ROLE OF ADVOCATE FOR SURVIVOR CARE**

- 2.1 The role of the advocate for survivor care will:
  - Provide support to an individual who has previously asked for help where there is no evidence that appropriate support has been provided or offered.
  - Encompass working with the DSA to ensure the support needs of all those impacted by PCR2 are considered and provided for.
  - Act as liaison between the survivor and the Independent Reviewer (IR's) to ensure the voices of the survivor is heard.

## **3 ENGAGEMENT**

- 3.1 In every case where engaging with those with lived experience of abuse is considered, their well-being will be the paramount consideration. It is very important that time is taken to consider the current circumstances of the individual and whether they have previously indicated their willingness to be contacted by the diocese in this way.
- 3.2 Planning the approach to any individual will involve a gentle, non-intrusive contact to see if further discussion or involvement would be welcomed. Independent sources of support will be available through the PCR2 advocate for survivor care via the DSA. Communication with the advocate will be immediately available to anyone that the diocese seeks to engage with in this way.
- 3.3 Where someone makes contact seeking to make representations to the PCR2 process, the DSA will liaise with the PCR Reference Group lead for survivor engagement and the IR to plan how best to receive the representations.
- 3.4 Where safeguarding professionals or diocesan clergy are in current contact with victims and survivors, who have experienced abuse by clergy or church officers, an invitation should be extended to victims and survivors to have contact with the IR if they so wish. Any such approach will be planned by the DSA with the advocate on the PCR reference group who has oversight for survivor support and well-being:
  - Consideration will be given as to how approaches may appropriately be made to parents or guardians of people under the age of 18.
  - Consideration will also be given to approaching those with advocacy or support roles for individuals with diminished capacity.
  - Any contact with an individual inviting them to express their views to the IR should make them aware that the IR is not able to pursue any personal concerns or issues which individuals may have.

- 3.5 If there are unmet support needs or unmitigated risk identified, then the IR will pass these to the DSA. The DSA will address these as per the usual work of the diocesan safeguarding team in line with House of Bishops' current practice guidance.
- 3.6 Those survivors who, after consideration of their needs, are approached, should be made aware that the purpose of their invitation to engage with the IR is to generate information about how victims and survivors have been responded to by the church. They should be invited to:
- Comment on how helpful they found the response.
  - Discuss what could have been done differently to meet their needs.
  - Any survivor engaging with the PCR2 process will be assured of support and of anonymity and that any sensitive information shared will be protected.
  - These insights will be utilised to assist the dioceses and the NST to improve their responses to victims and survivors.

#### **4 SPECIFIC CASES**

- 4.1 Where contact with named individuals is deemed necessary because the PCR2 has identified previously recorded incidents of abuse where risk mitigation, statutory reporting, criminal investigation or survivor support has been inadequate; then a clear survivor focused plan needs to be put in place.
- 4.2 In all such cases planning should be in partnership with the police and/or the local authority who will be responsible for carrying out statutory investigations of a criminal or safeguarding nature.
- 4.3 It is the role of the DSA to ensure that there is a broad spectrum of support options available to meet the needs of those who may be seeking support. Provision of support will be discussed with the advocate for survivor care and with statutory agencies where there is police or local authority involvement, so there can be a coordinated response with the survivor at the centre.
- 4.4 No survivor should be contacted by the DSA, the advocate for survivor care, police or the local authority without a plan in place to offer them immediate care and support. There should be:
- Planned pastoral care available within a church context for those that want this.
  - Access to support and care that is provided independently from the church context for those that need it. Some people may need both pastoral and psychological support and one should not be offered at the exclusion of the other.
  - From the outset the individual needing support should be asked what would best meet their needs.
  - Any survivor engaging with the PCR2 process will be assured of support and of anonymity and that any sensitive information shared will be protected.
- 4.5 The establishing or cementing of effective local partnerships (e.g. with Victim Support, Rape Crisis, local counselling providers etc.) will be undertaken by the DSA, with support from the PCR reference group and the advocate for survivor care.

# Process

Two Independent Reviewers were selected from the approved list of reviewers held by the National Safeguarding Team to carry out the review and had an agreed Terms of Reference with St Albans Diocese.

The Bishop of St Albans sent a letter to every incumbent setting out the bishops' support for the PCR process and an explanation that for this review to be undertaken, parish input is essential.

The letter included;

- The House of Bishops wishes to ensure that our churches and church related activities are as safe as possible for children and vulnerable adults
- It is important that all known cases of concern about the behaviour of clergy and church officers towards children and vulnerable adults have been considered and dealt with appropriately. Incumbents are asked to check that all known instances within their parish(es) both historically and currently have been notified to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, and any which have not, are reported immediately
- This is obviously a sensitive task which may require looking at parish files and making some discreet enquiries. Where, prima facie there is a past concern, details of which are not known, it may be appropriate to consult a previous incumbent where possible. In the spirit of the Gospel we all want to protect and care for our children and at a time when the Church's safeguarding policies and practices are under close scrutiny incumbents will recognise the importance of being as sure as possible that all known instances of concern have been addressed
- Information is being sought on persons who have or have had a role in the Church where their role brings them into contact with children or with adults at risk of abuse. Information is not being requested on worshippers and those attending church activities who do not hold a role in the Church. You do not need to provide details of people subject to safeguarding agreements. Protective measures should have been installed in such cases. The advice of the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser should be sought in any instances of doubt
- Advice on whether a particular circumstance should be reported may be obtained from the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser
- Experience has shown that there have been some cases of alleged abuse to people over 16 who have later said that they consented. Any such cases should be included even though prosecution or cautioning has not taken place
- It is recognised that this is a difficult task. Incumbents are being asked to ensure that everything that is relevant and currently known has been passed to the DSA and that further information which may emerge in future is promptly notified to them
- The communication should require incumbents to return a confirmation.

St Albans Diocese received 100% response and all information received was considered by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and actioned where necessary.

Cases that fell within the scope of PCR2 were then examined by the Independent Reviewers.

## Recording methods

The Independent Reviewers (IRs) provided proforma file certificates, completed by hand, signed and dated, by the IRs. The IRs added identifiable information about each file. The name, position held, whether any concerns were identified, DBS, whether the person required adding to the known case list. This check list allowed the IRs to meet the objectives of the PCR2.

The IRs used an electronic database for recording the information contained within the file certificates to provide the Diocese with an electronic auditable record of the PCR2 findings.

The IRs were provided with a form – ‘Independent Reviewers Record of Concern’. A total of 19 such forms were completed in relation to Diocesan files.

The use of the proforma certificates previously mentioned ensured consistency of approach by the IRs.

The IRs used a RAG rating system for all clergy blue files, personnel files and the Known Cases List (KCL).

- Red – requiring immediate action.
- Amber – requiring further investigation, resolution.
- Green – no further actions required.

These corresponded to the entry on the electronic database.

The DSA maintained contact with the IRs throughout every stage of the process. Meetings were held on a regular basis to discuss any referrals or any other matters arising.

The IRs discussed cases on a regular basis, sharing observations for second opinions and, any emerging themes.

The IRs used Crockford’s Clerical Directory for providing career histories, the hard copy printouts provided by the Diocese for cross referencing DBS and safeguarding training checks.

## Data

The reviewers examined files in relation to 1,848 people including;

- Clergy, including those with Permission to Officiate
- Retired clergy without Permission to Officiate
- Readers and others with the Bishop’s Licence
- Diocesan and parish lay employees including those paid fees and honoraria.

They further examined 99 cases which were included on a Known Cases List (KCL), prepared by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

The Known Case List comprises all clergy and church officers where information exists concerning abuse or inappropriate behaviour towards a child or adult, including:

### Child

- Behaviour which has harmed, may have harmed or is likely to harm a child, including neglect
- Possible commission of a criminal offence against or related to a child including the viewing, downloading or possess of indecent images of children
- Behaviour that indicates that the person is unsuitable to work with children More than one low level concerns which would not, taken individually, meet the threshold for referral but taken together would justify further exploration
- Allegations that indicate a church officer was being in a position of responsibility or authority, where they were trusted by others and used this position to groom or exploit children
- Any cases where victims have reported abuse but where, following investigation, there has been insufficient evidence to substantiate the claim or report.

## Adult

- Behaviour which has harmed, may have harmed or is likely to harm a vulnerable adult
- Behaviour which could be relevant to a criminal offence against an adult/vulnerable adult
- Behaviour which indicates that the person is unsuitable to work with vulnerable adults
- More than one low level concern which would not, taken individually, meet the threshold for referral but taken together would justify further exploration.

## Review Findings

The Independent Reviewers (IRs) were welcomed into the Diocese by the DSA, Bishop of St Albans, the Bishop's Chaplain, and administrative staff. The files were readily made available to the reviewers. It was evident that the Diocese wished to be open and transparent giving the reviewers free access to files, both hard copies and those held by the DSA on electronic databases. Administrative staff were available to assist with any queries, access arrangements, providing the reviewers with detailed spreadsheets of DBS and Safeguarding training data. A total of 1,848 files were reviewed.

All clergy blue files were in excellent order, only the necessary information was retained in the files as per the guidelines, House of Bishops policy *Personal Files Relating to Clergy*.

On the arrival of a new member of the clergy, their blue file is reviewed and streamlined to the appropriate standard.

Any clergy blue file that had a corresponding safeguarding file contained a notice stating that a safeguarding file was held with the DSA or within another diocese.

The files are a credit to the Bishop's staff.

The reviewers found the management and timely response to child and adult safeguarding concerns was good. This was evident in the number of current open cases.

The DSA has introduced a new referral and recording system, with case references.

Safeguarding files held by the DSA are in general electronic files, some hard copy files are held in secure cabinets. Access to all safeguarding files is restricted to the DSA and Assistant DSAs.

The files held within the electronic database were comprehensive and well-documented. The reviewers were unanimous in their findings that there was a significant improvement in the recording of investigations since the current DSA and Assistant DSAs have been in post. (This is relevant to the role/job description of the previous DSA).

With the increase in capacity the DSA's have been able to introduce a more robust recording system, allowing improvement in the monitoring of cases, investigation, and training. However, the remit of safeguarding continues to expand recently seeing the growth of domestic and spiritual abuse, new training programmes, increase in workload; as a result, resourcing is an area that requires ongoing review.

The DSA demonstrated a good working knowledge of the KCL. Cases evidence good practice, documenting prompt responses to referrals, sensitive, transparent empathetic communications with victims/survivors/complainants/respondents; appropriate referrals to statutory and non-statutory agencies, information sharing, convening of core groups, risk management.

This is also reflected in the number of cases referred to the DSA by the IRs for resolution. As previously stated none of the cases referred related to any child or adult at risk or survivor who had not received the level of service now expected by the Church of England.

In the cases where the IRs identified further action was required, following a discussion with the DSA, the DSA dealt with them in a timely, efficient manner. (allowing for Covid-19 restrictions).

Following the review in consultation with the DSA the IR was able to re-rate all amber rated cases to green. Each case either having been completed to a resolution or with a case management plan.

As a result of the Bishop's letter to Parishes, the Diocese received a 100% return; 65 cases were known and on the KCL with three new referrals. None of the referrals posed a risk to children or adults.

Good practice is evident throughout the Diocese. The IRs were able to see first-hand the good links with police and statutory agencies. There is however evidence of frustrating times for the DSA waiting on police to respond, update the DSA with decisions, keeping the DSA updated with the investigation process.

The DSAs have close links with other dioceses. This is evident in the referrals, sharing of information, independent reviewing of cases, assistance in investigations, complaints. There is an openness to share good practice.

The Diocese does not have a Human Resources Department; this lends itself to queries that are not of a safeguarding nature referred to the DSA causing an unnecessary workload.

There is no case management system for recording.

The Diocese's website gives clear guidance for survivors of abuse with details of Safe Spaces and helpline numbers.

The IR and the DSA have discussed survivor involvement in the review it was felt at this time that unless a survivor came forward it was not appropriate for the DSA to make an approach. It was evident within the safeguarding files that the DSA and ADSA have good links with survivors linking in with outside agencies in support of the survivor, keeping them up to date with case management.

To date no survivors have come forward wishing to take part in the review.

To date no new referrals/victims/survivors have been received, come forward because of publicity relating to the review.

Clergy files do not hold details of complaints that are not subject to CDM process or safeguarding.

Currently there is no policy within the Diocese or the national Church to address the issue of organisations disclosing information to the licensing diocese of complaints, safeguarding matters, relating to Chaplains.

## Review Recommendations

The recommendations are being considered and will be actioned, and a report submitted to the July DSAP meeting. However, some of the recommendations have already been addressed.

#	Recommendation	Action taken or planned
1	The Diocese should consider whether there are enough resources dedicated to the diocesan safeguarding role	A further full time assistant safeguarding adviser and part time dedicated safeguarding administrator are now in place  Oversight and administration for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks now sits within the safeguarding team, with a dedicated administrator appointed to improve governance and accountability
2	Consideration should be given to a case management system. (The IRs understand this is currently with the NST to introduce a national case management system and St Albans Diocese intend to adopt this system once Phase 1 piloting is complete)	The Diocese will adopt the National Case Management System in early 2023, along with other dioceses when this project goes to Phase 2
3	The Diocese to review their current procedures in regard to the storage, accessibility and management of essential data including DBS renewal, safeguarding training, CDM or complaint, safeguarding information, date of PTO renewal to ensure they have a robust system that meets all current safeguarding requirements	This is complete, with work already completed around the collation, management and sharing of data after this was identified as a need for review, identified through the PCR2 process and prior to the final report being received
4	The Diocese to consider an agreement with Chaplains and their respective organisations, to whom they are in a regular working arrangement, to disclose to the Diocese any complaints/disciplinary action especially those of a safeguarding nature	Letters from the Bishop of St Albans and the DSA have been sent to each organisation and chaplain
5	The Diocese to consider a triage system for the management of enquiries into the Safeguarding team that do not fit the remit	Enquiries received that are not of a safeguarding nature are always passed on the relevant person or department for action
6	The Diocese to consider a policy for recording complaints of clergy behaviour with specific consideration being given to how the complaint, resolution is recorded in the clergy blue file	Advice has been taken from the Diocesan Registrar and included in an information guidance document. This is on the Bishop's Senior Staff agenda this year

## Review Conclusion

The PCR2 of the Diocese of St Albans has met all objectives as set out in the Protocol and Practice Guidance. All amber and red cases have been dealt with to a satisfactory conclusion. The DSA and Safeguarding Team are to be credited for the efficiency, sensitive and prompt action taken in all cases.

As far as practicable all allegations of abuse of children or adults previously recorded or identified within this review have been dealt with appropriately and proportionately to a standard that is expected of the Diocese of St. Albans and the national Church. It is recognized that some cases due to time lapse and change in church policy are not of the present acceptable standard. However, the needs of the survivor where the survivor is known have been addressed. All risks have been considered and addressed.

The Diocese of St Albans has evidenced some excellent working practices. There are areas for improvement at a local and national level. The Safeguarding Team are dedicated, professional and, committed to producing a high standard of work with the interests of the victims/survivors uppermost.