



social care
institute for excellence

Audit Summary & Action Plan

**The Church of England - Birmingham
Independent Safeguarding Audit**
conducted by
Social Care Institute for Excellence
(April 2016)

INTRODUCTION

The Social Care Institute for Excellence was awarded the contract to provide an independent audit of safeguarding arrangements in each diocese by the Church of England during 2016 and 2017.

The audit process includes a consideration of:

- Governance arrangements
- Case work related to allegations of abuse or serious safeguarding incidents
- Risk management
- Safer recruitment
- Complaints about the diocesan response to safeguarding alerts

The process, which involved reviewing documentation as well as talking to key people and a parish focus group, took place in Birmingham between the 12th and 14th April 2016. A summary of the auditor's report is provided below. The full report is available on our *website*.

AUDIT SUMMARY

WHAT IS WORKING WELL?

- The Diocese of Birmingham has in place a safeguarding team consisting of a part-time consultant Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser (BSA), a part-time Bishop's Adults Safeguarding Adviser (BASA), full-time Safeguarding Training & Development Officer, and a full-time dedicated Safeguarding Support Officer. This structure has been created in the last year in order to form an identifiable safeguarding team and to increase capacity to deliver safeguarding training. Training is now offered both in parishes and centrally within the diocesan offices, and the range and quality of training now available was positively commented on by the Focus Group.
- From his own account and supported by casework evidence, the BSA has good links with both regional and national DSA networks.
- On a casework basis, the BSA has very good links with the relevant teams of the police and probation service. Core group members (who oversee Safeguarding Children Agreements and are drawn from the parish) are appointed promptly with clarity about their role.

- DBS checks are undertaken in a timely manner and are contracted out to CCPAS (The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service), which was viewed as a positive and efficient move by everyone interviewed.
- The Senior Clerical Team demonstrated it is highly committed to children's and adults' safeguarding during the course of the audit and from documentation supplied to the auditors.
- There is a Quarterly Case Panel, run by the BSA and attended by the Bishop's Chaplain and both Archdeacons that reviews active cases. This is a good example of how members of the Senior Clerical Team are kept up to date in regard to active casework.
- There is a clear training plan in place, and there was positive feedback about the delivery of that training. Of particular note was the availability of specific training for Chaplains (run by Churches and Industry Group Birmingham) and training on the use of social media.
- The HR function appeared to be compliant with safeguarding requirements and undertaken in a highly efficient manner. Job descriptions and person specifications were clear and relevant.
- There are strong safeguarding links with the Cathedral. The BSA and BASA services and training are available to them. The Cathedral has also undertaken a self-audit of its safeguarding activity.

WHAT NEEDS TO WORK BETTER?

- There is currently no social work expertise in the children's or vulnerable adults' safeguarding process within the Diocese, despite the professional lead role of social workers in statutory guidance.
- The auditors were given assurances by the BSA that local authority designated officers (LADOs) are regularly consulted for advice. However, this advice was not seen on any case files, except in one case where the BSA had attended relevant meetings.
- Adult safeguarding is identified by some of those interviewed as not being as well developed as children's safeguarding, although improvements in the training available were identified by the focus group.
- The details of the cases were provided to the BSA and the Director of HR, and whilst the overall standard of the casework was reasonable, the following areas for improvement were identified:
 - A focus on the 'here and now' with insufficient account taken of any known history/previous concerns that could also impact and inform the

current situation

- There were times when specific action was required to be taken, but this could often take several months to be done
- Some reviews of SCAs (Safeguarding Children Agreements) were undertaken via email, rather than in person.
- There was some lack of clarity about whether the BSA or the BASA should undertake Type A Risk Assessments (those undertaken by a DSA taking into account assessments undertaken by other agencies) for vulnerable adults.
- There has been a recent significant improvement in the standard of the filing. But until the end of last year, files were very large and in little order, with the result that it would have been very difficult to quickly extract key information (and also made the auditing process difficult).
- Both adults' and children's safeguarding files are kept securely in the homes of the respective advisers, who are home-based, although we were advised that they are accessible at all times to the Director of HR. It is important that all files are held as diocesan records and are available now and in the future to relevant others in a central location.

SUMMARY OF CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE DIOCESE

The term 'considerations' instead of recommendations is used in the SCIE Learning Together methodology. The reason for this is that it is important that each diocese decides exactly how to implement the improvements indicated; this is likely to be different from place to place. Some considerations will be around taking specific types of action, whilst others will be alerting the Diocese to develop its safeguarding planning in the future.

These considerations are to be found at the end of each of the sections in The Findings, where applicable. They are listed below for ease of reference, but the detail behind each of these is in the findings section and consequently not repeated here.

Whilst both adviser posts are in receipt of professional supervision and consultation, it would be preferable to have supervisors from an experienced safeguarding social worker manager.

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: Identification of social work supervision for the BSA is ongoing.

ACTION PLAN: Two possible contacts have been identified and will be approached.

How to meet the requirements of Protecting All God's Children (A49) within the diocesan safeguarding adviser service i.e. the need for safeguarding expertise and professional qualification.

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: Both of our BSAs have safeguarding expertise. Our STDO is

working towards accreditation as a safeguarding trainer with the NSPCC

Consider how to enable wider knowledge of the identities and function of BSA and the BASA including making them the first point of contact for enquiries and possible/actual referrals (rather than via the Bishop's Chaplain) and developing a communications plan with parishes to involve naming the respective advisers on the diocesan website and other promotional material.

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: Our first point of contact for reporting safeguarding concerns is now the BSA.

ACTION PLAN: This will be communicated to parishes via the Parish Safeguarding Poster, Safeguarding Small Guide the clergy e-newsletter, during training and on our website.

The BSMG to consider meeting more regularly than half yearly, for example, quarterly.

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: BSMG discussed this in May 2016. It was decided to continue with half yearly meetings and convene additional meetings as required

The BSMG, whilst recognising the problems in recent years within Birmingham Children's Services, to persevere in its attempts to include professional expertise from both children's and adults social work, and for there to be further efforts to obtain representation from the statutory agencies/professions involved in safeguarding.

ACTION PLAN: We will continue in our efforts to source representation/involvement from statutory agencies/professions. Two possible contacts have been identified to follow up.

A Cathedral representative to be recruited.

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: The Cathedral Dean and Director of Resources were invited to join the group. The invitation was accepted and they are now members.

Update the diocesan website to take into account the Care Act 2014.

ACTION PLAN: The website will be updated when our safeguarding policies are revised.

For the long-term development of the safeguarding service, consideration to be given to any need for the advisers to be office-based and whether there needs to be a professional (such as a social work qualified) team lead responsibility for the safeguarding service.

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: The BSA is now based at 1 Colmore Row

To prioritise the development of a shared database on safeguarding cases along with the development of comprehensive recording systems for safeguarding, which:

- *provide for the secure storage and maintenance of records within the diocesan office*

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: All paper records are now stored securely at 1 Colmore Row

- *is compliant with data protection requirements for those working from home*

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: This is no longer relevant as the BSA is based at 1 Colmore Row

– *provide consistent cross-referencing systems for safeguarding concerns between different records.*

ACTION PLAN: The BSA is reviewing record management and recording

To implement a reliable process so that centrally held records of safeguarding training undertaken by members of the clergy are also included in their blue files.

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: Training records are held electronically and accessible to all staff who need them. A copy of an individual's training record is now included in their blue file when they transfer to another diocese

To continue to improve file organisation, and compile case summaries or a chronology for the identified complex and historical cases.

ACTION PLAN: The BSA will review record management and recording

To explore the use of an electronic recording process for casework: other dioceses which have already implemented such systems may be able to provide advice.

ACTION PLAN: The BSA will review record management and recording

Clarify responsibility for undertaking the risk assessments of vulnerable adults (i.e. BSA or BASA).

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: The BSA will undertake all risk assessments and seek advice of the BASA as appropriate

Clarify language used in regard to the group that oversees SCAs as distinct from the core group that should be formed in every serious safeguarding situation which relates to a church officer.

ACTION PLAN: The BSA will review this

The BSA to routinely evidence on case files any discussions with LADOs.

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: This is now being implemented

Establish the obstacles to timely follow-up actions and take action to minimise delay.

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: This is now being implemented

How to facilitate closer working between the BSA and BASA where a vulnerable adult is involved in a children's case.

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: The BSA and BASA have met to review this and it is now being implemented

How to be confident that the full history of previous concerns/offences is taken into account when assessing and considering current risk.

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: This is now being implemented

The safeguarding advisers to continue to develop close working relationships with all local authority LADOs/safeguarding advisers in both children's and adults' services, and ensure that any contact/advice that is forthcoming is noted in case files.

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: The BSA has a network of relationships with statutory agencies from her previous employment

ACTION PLAN: The BSA will establish new networks as appropriate

For reviews of Safeguarding Children Agreements to be undertaken in a face-to-face meeting, except in exceptional and justifiable circumstances.

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: This is now being implemented

In situations where it is not possible to convene a timely initial SCA meeting, and a letter is used in lieu of an SCA, a properly convened initial SCA meeting is held as soon as possible after the sending out of the letter with all members of the core group present.

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: This is now being implemented

Compile and publish a procedure for complaints about safeguarding that includes how to make a complaint and what to expect in terms of timeliness of response as well as the details of who will respond.

ACTION PLAN: We will action this once national practice guidance is issued

Initiate annual reporting of complaints in regard to the handling of safeguarding issues, and their outcomes, into the BSMG.

ACTION PLAN: BSMG to discuss and agree

Write and publish the whistleblowing policy and procedure. Ensure it differentiates between whistleblowing in regard to safeguarding matters and other areas, such as bullying/harassment, finances.

ACTION PLAN: We will action this once national practice guidance is issued

How to use data/information on safeguarding provided in the Articles of Enquiry to inform future planning of safeguarding services and resources.

ACTION PLAN: Data from 2016 Articles of Enquiry will be reviewed and actioned once it has been collated

Consider developing an information-sharing protocol with other major faith groups

represented within the Diocese.

ACTION PLAN: The BSA will review this

Improve the process to facilitate the BSA and BASA sharing information and working together as and when required.

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: The BSA and BASA have met to review this and it is now being implemented

Establish a quality assurance process.

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT: This has been included in our safeguarding programme of work

Actions identified by this audit will be managed and reviewed by the Bishop's Safeguarding Management Group every six months.