

**ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL**

**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE BISHOP OF ROCHESTER  
REGARDING SAFEGUARDING**

**REPORT FOR THE PERIOD:  
1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022**

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## Introduction

This is the fourth Annual Report submitted by Chapter on safeguarding in and across the Cathedral community. Following on from the previous year, the nation remained in the grip of the Coronavirus pandemic, which brought more lockdowns and Cathedral closures.

As we commemorated the anniversary of the first lockdown in March 2021, life began to open up and a sense of semi-normality returned, particularly in terms of our worship and visitor experience. The Visitor Service Assistants (VSAs) were recruited and started working on the cathedral floor, welcoming visitors. Meanwhile an HR manager was appointed, following a recommendation to improve our HR administration made by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) audit report of 2019. Staff came back to work and volunteers began to return in greater numbers, their confidence growing. Some however have still not returned to volunteering. In Garth House there have been periods of working from home and at other times staff have been in the offices. At this time, as we pass the landmark of the second anniversary of the Lockdowns, there is a semblance of normality and emergence from Covid, although the pandemic is by no means over.

Throughout, the administrative work of safeguarding policy and practice continued, and the Cathedral Safeguarding Group (CSG) continued to meet, initially on Zoom, and then as the year progressed, in person and in 'hybrid' configurations, chaired by the Canon Chancellor. It has continued to identify, discuss, and build on good work and practice, reviewing the Safeguarding Action Plan; assessing risk assessments for events; keeping informed of National Church policies, updates and recommendations as well as monitoring safeguarding incidents and discussing particular issues that have arisen.

The progress made between 2018 and 2020 has been built on and in the paragraphs that follow, we review the key safeguarding areas of the last year and look forward to continued consolidation of and progress in safeguarding practice, implementation, governance, and leadership in 2022-23.

## **Music Department (including links with the King's School Rochester (KSR))**

The positive relationship between the cathedral music department and KSR continues to develop. With the changes to the structure of the Cathedral choir and the introduction of a mixed treble line, the transition period is well underway and eventually all choristers will be at KSR, and the benefits of joint working and good communication resulting from this are much appreciated. The various structural meetings that take place on a weekly and termly basis between KSR and Cathedral staff have strengthened these relationships. The Chorister Tutor (employed by KSR and funded by the Cathedral) is another positive benefit of the increased joint working. We continue to also value the role of volunteer chaperones, who are mainly chorister parents, but recruiting additional volunteer chaperones has been challenging and we may need to look at other models, such as paying for chaperone cover to continue the robust systems of care for the choristers to which both KSR and the Cathedral are committed.

Key safeguarding documents and procedures, including written protocols and policies and the chorister handbook, continue to be kept under annual review. Following the successful introduction of permanent Principal Lay Clerks, there has been much progress made on reviewing and improving procedures for Deputy Lay Clerks in relation to recruitment, record-keeping and safeguarding training. The Cathedral Safeguarding Officer has advised that DBS checks are not permitted for Principal and Deputy Lay Clerks and this advice has been followed.

## **Education**

Visits resumed on 19th May 2021. All schools are sent and asked to complete safeguarding documentation at the point of booking a visit to the Cathedral. Any groups arriving without prior booking are also asked to complete the same form. Guidelines for dealing with un-booked groups and missing persons have also been updated and shared with volunteers and

the new Visitor Services Team. Four Learning Assistants have been appointed, with safeguarding forming an important part of their induction. Safeguarding is discussed at all Learning Team volunteer meetings.

## **Volunteers**

Sandy Struben, the Volunteer Manager has overhauled all aspects of volunteers' understanding and reporting of safeguarding. As training and refresher courses are online, care and attention has been taken to ensure that all volunteers remain up to date in their learning and knowledge. As volunteers returned during the Covid pandemic, questionnaires and declaration forms were created, to ensure not only that the volunteers were safe and comfortable to return, but that their vulnerabilities were taken into account. Inductions were provided to ensure that volunteers were confident in their return and opportunities have been made to keep in contact with them regularly. No volunteer is able to return to the Cathedral without up-to-date safeguarding training and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check in place (if required). For some, online training is a challenge, and we began to provide the opportunity to learn with face-to-face training.

Volunteer Information folders held at the Welcome Desks are updated regularly with current safeguarding information, incident forms and a flowchart of how to report an incident.

## **Staff**

The SCIE report recommended that the Cathedral improve its access to HR expertise to help embed safer recruitment practices in all parts of the Cathedral. Suzy Bull was appointed as HR Manager and started in April 2021 with the intention of bringing HR experience and expertise to our systems and processes and oversee our commitment to safe recruitment

and working practices. For example, it has been agreed that where references for existing members of cathedral staff are sought and provided they will be factual only. Francesca Massey, Director of Music, resigned at the end of 2021 and Jeremy Lloyd, her Assistant, is currently acting Director. Recruitment for a new Director is currently in progress and it is hoped to make a new appointment very soon.

The VSAs have been employed since July and have proved a valuable asset to us all. They provide not only a professional and friendly welcome, which includes asking for donations from visitors, but alertness to those who need or seek help, assisting with reporting incidents, and identifying concerns. Similarly, the Café has re-opened with two part-time staff managing it. Other new appointments have been made in Garth House and on the Cathedral floor, a new verger among them. Some restructuring has occurred, and more changes will be introduced this year.

All staff, where appropriate, are subject to DBS checks. Staff are required to undertake safeguarding training to the appropriate level (see page 8).

### **Safeguarding Action Plan (SAP)**

One of the most tangible consequences of the SCIE report of September 2019 was the creation and implementation of a SAP by which specific and general recommendations and advice was distilled into task-focussed, achievable, and sustainable elements, to be implemented and recorded using a red-amber-green (RAG) approach. This plan has already been revised and updated and is reviewed at CSG meetings and overseen by Chapter. Many tasks and ambitions are now fulfilled, some are ongoing, and some require advice and instruction from the National Safeguarding Team (NST) which we still await. In particular, the SAP shows completion and development of objectives relating to training of staff and volunteers; the management and storage of safeguarding data; close working relationships with KSR; policies concerning complaints, whistleblowing, responding well to victim and

survivors of abuse, and safer recruitment and people management. The SAP overview is on the Cathedral website, alongside policies and much other material relating to safeguarding in the Cathedral and further afield. The SAP is a 'live' document', regularly reviewed and monitored, collectively and collaboratively.

### **Learning Lessons Review (LLR) – William Scott Farrell (WSF)**

The overview report of the independent LLR commissioned by the NST in 2019 is due to be published in May 2022. WSF was the Cathedral's Director of Music between 2008 and 2018. The review examines the employment of Scott Farrell; the Cathedral's response to his arrest and subsequent conviction for sexual offences committed whilst he was Assistant Director of Music and Director of Music at Ely and Rochester Cathedrals, respectively. The review also includes his time at Ely and Newcastle cathedrals.

### **Diocesan Committees**

The Canon Chancellor represents the Cathedral at the Diocesan Safeguarding Executive Committee (SEC) while the Dean sits on the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP). This interconnectedness with the diocese provides opportunity for mutual support, advice and accountability. The significant benefit of having had the Lead Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, Greg Barry, as Cathedral Safeguarding Officer is also to be acknowledged and affirmed, particularly as he has recently stepped down from this role (retaining his role in the diocese).

## Training

According to the Cathedral Training Policy, mandated by the House of Bishops Practice Guidance and Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework 2021, the Cathedral has produced a policy and a plan. All staff are now required to undertake Basic Awareness and Foundation Training, provided online by the NST. This makes any member of staff deployable on the Cathedral floor, e.g., for special events such as the Gaia Exhibition and other summer exhibitions. Some staff are required to do Safeguarding Leadership Training, and alongside senior diocesan staff and clerical members of Chapter and the Chapter Clerk, have also undertaken Senior Leadership Safeguarding Training. Furthermore, Chapter has mandated that all staff and volunteers should undertake the Domestic Abuse and Modern Slavery modules of online training. We feel that these are valuable in their own right and add to the layers of 'protection' we offer in the context of an 'open', free to enter cathedral.

We aim to lead the way and set an example in safeguarding learning and development in terms of the level of training we require from staff and volunteers. While some volunteers have difficulty accessing online material, this is not a problem for employees. There has been some resistance among volunteers to being asked to complete domestic abuse and modern slavery awareness training. Chapter will continue to consider the impact and necessity of such training. Some relevant staff and volunteers have also undertaken Safer Recruitment training, to ensure that good practice and knowledge is embedded in all our recruitment of any staff and volunteers.

Below is a schedule of the total numbers of staff and volunteers who have completed the various levels of training in the last twelve months.



|                   | Staff (96 in total) | Volunteers (245 in total) |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Basic Awareness   | 42                  | 121                       |
| Foundation        | 73                  | 149                       |
| Leadership        | 6                   | 12                        |
| Safer Recruitment | 13                  | 1                         |
| Modern Slavery    | 11                  | 34                        |
| Domestic Abuse    | 32                  | 64                        |
| Senior Leadership | 5                   | 0                         |

### **Domestic Abuse, Modern Slavery and Vulnerable Adults**

Victims, survivors, and perpetrators of domestic abuse are part of our community. Awareness of increased domestic abuse during the coronavirus pandemic has been highlighted as so many people have found themselves at home so much more, where being so could be dangerous or damaging. The CSG has two representatives who keep us alert to these issues. All staff and volunteers have been required to undertake online or in person training in this area of concern. A recent Staff Forum was devoted to awareness-raising on Modern Slavery and County Lines. Some of our volunteers are themselves vulnerable adults of whom we take special care.

## **Victims and Survivors**

Further to the SCIE audit highlighting the need for the Cathedral to consult and engage with survivors and victims of abuse on various levels, the new House of Bishops guidance “Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse” (2021) was received and adopted by Chapter. The Canon Chancellor has built ongoing relationships with Survivors’ Voices and individuals who have been abused or represent them, and a process of listening and careful relationship-building has been fruitful and humbling.

## **The Safeguarding Season**

Significantly and successfully in collaboration with the diocese, a “Safeguarding Season” was offered in October 2021 to raise awareness and express support for and solidarity with victims and survivors. The season began with a launch of a “Loudfence” an installation whereby anyone could tie a ribbon in solidarity with victims and survivors of abuse. We believe we are the first cathedral in the world to do this. Carlisle followed suit (and we have built a relationship with them in this regard too). A member of Survivors’ Voices came to help launch the month, and Meridian TV came the following day. The Canon Chancellor gave an interview, and the subject was sympathetically covered. The Loudfence remained on site on the street railings for a month and was a colourful, lamentable reminder of the impact upon, and solidarity for survivors and victims of abuse. There was a small amount of criticism of this enterprise, but overall, it was welcomed and well received.

A season of online videos were made by various people with safeguarding experience, to raise awareness on particular issues, such as modern slavery, county lines, domestic abuse, and elder abuse. In partnership with the Diocesan Communications Officer, sixteen videos were “released” every other day on the diocesan safeguarding pages and various contributors were involved from across the diocese and Cathedral community. They remain a resource for future use.

A “Service of Lament”, with Taizé Music was offered on 27<sup>th</sup> October, and a specific event for victims to gather together on “All Survivors Day” (3<sup>rd</sup> November). The Mothers Union produced a crocheted “chain” for 18th October, Modern Slavery Awareness Day - which fell within the Season and a service of Choral Evensong was devoted to the reception of the crocheted chain which was then displayed in the Lady Chapel. Similarly, the sixteen days of action for violence against women (which includes White Ribbon Day) also fell within the season and was marked with signage, spire-lighting and liturgical reference. During that period a vigil march led by the Mothers Union finished at the Cathedral with prayers and an observance of a silence. Safeguarding Sunday was marked, as it has been for several years, and it is noted that in 2022 Safeguarding Sunday will fall at the end of November to coincide with the National Safeguarding of Adults week.

Rochester Cathedral has taken the opportunity to be the first cathedral to engage in this fragile and important field of ministry, not simply because of recent history but due to the networks of experience, wisdom, friendship, and trust that have been gently and quietly built. Other cathedrals will likely follow our lead, as indeed have some parishes already, such as in Gravesend. The Canon Chancellor remains engaged on a personal level with some victims and survivors.

## **Website and Social Media**

The Safeguarding Season provided a wonderful opportunity to present safeguarding issues and raise awareness among thousands of people.

The safeguarding pages of the website are regularly reviewed and contain documents, policies, advice, signposting and sermons and articles relating to safeguarding. The spire is sometimes lit for safeguarding-related themes or observances, coupled with informative social media posts. During lockdowns, the Cathedral spire was a focus for care and prayer

and has become a vehicle for awareness-raising of many issues, safeguarding-related ones among them.

### **Cathedral Sunday Club**

All Sunday Club volunteers keep up to date with Basic Awareness and Foundation Training and at Sunday Club staff meetings, safeguarding is discussed. The Canon Chancellor is also the Safeguarding Lead and has oversight of the Sunday Club. A new voluntary Children's and Young People's Representative with special regard for both the choristers and Sunday Club has been appointed. The Sunday Club meets weekly in the Crypt and is thriving, growing a significant body of younger members of our Sunday Eucharist congregation.

### **Cathedral Safeguarding Officer (CSO)**

The CSO's role includes advising on the initial response to incidents, training, policy and attendance at meetings. Greg Barry, the first Cathedral Safeguarding Officer (CSO) had been in post for four years, and the role continued to require more and more time.

One of the SAP actions is to ensure that the CSO role is adequately resourced, and Chapter decided in 2021 to create a new post by directly employing a CSO. The provision by the diocese for Greg Barry as CSO ended at the end of February 2022. The Cathedral owes him a huge debt of gratitude for his diligence, attention, advice and determination to make Rochester Cathedral a safe place for all, and the Canon Chancellor is especially grateful for guidance and support in recent years.

Sorry as we are to lose Greg Barry as CSO, we retain diocesan connections and are pleased to say that we have recruited and appointed Larry Deabreu as CSO and he has recently begun working with and for us, two days a week.

## **The Year Ahead**

Now that Cathedral life begins to approach what we may have hitherto considered “normal” there is much to consolidate and develop. With a new CSO in post there will be new perspectives to consider and advice to take. The implication and response to the NST report on Scott Farrell cannot be calculated at this stage, but that report will soon be in the public domain.

With a number of us having done the Senior Leadership Training there is much on which to reflect in terms of leadership, modelling, and awareness-raising. Work with victims and survivors continues. We are also aware of our responsibilities and aspirations in terms of diversity in and around the Cathedral. The reintroduction of the Staff Forum gives opportunities to provide staff - and volunteers – with monthly topics of discussion and learning and a programme is being developed. We also anticipate with joy the arrival of a new Bishop of Rochester with whom we hope and intend to engage constructively and collaboratively, not least in terms of safeguarding.

The Canon Chancellor retains his distinctive and defined brief as Chapter Safeguarding Lead. Culture change and safeguarding expertise among staff and volunteers is growing. While there is no room for complacency in matters of safeguarding, we have reason to be cautiously confident as we enter another year, which will likely continue to be marked by numerous challenges and changes in our local, national and global life.

We retain our networking contact with the NST, with the Cathedrals Safeguarding Network and with the Cathedral Safeguarding Leads group. Fellowship, good practice and support are shared in these spheres. The new Cathedrals Measure brings opportunities and challenges, including the creation of an overarching Safeguarding Policy, linking together all the various local and national policies to which we strive to adhere.

## Dean's Perspective

It has been a year of steady progress, but not without its challenges. Having recognised the importance of cultural change, we have attempted this year to further embed a healthy culture by encouraging conversations and training within the organisation. Culture cannot be imposed, indeed cultural change that comes as an edict may simply add to a climate of blame and mistrust. It is important to foster an atmosphere that is open, transparent, and collaborative if we are going to be confident in challenging ourselves and one another. We haven't always got it right. Nevertheless, Chapter have been clear about addressing cultural change and this year due attention was given to this challenge. Chapter have committed further resources to this work.

We are immensely grateful to Greg Barry who has accompanied us on the journey thus far. It has not been easy, and we have been fortunate to have someone of Greg's professionalism and expertise. He has challenged and supported and although handing over the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer role to Larry Deabreu, will remain the Lead Safeguarding Adviser for the Diocese.

The continuing effects of COVID have made meetings and the embedding of ongoing training a challenge. The new Church of England safeguarding learning pathways have required a great deal of time to implement and I'm grateful to colleagues who have worked very hard to get this right. With a very small team and often people absent through COVID this has taken a longer time frame than expected. Work has continued on the WSF LLR, and we await the recommendations from the overview writer's report which will impact the Cathedral and be integrated into the Cathedral's Safeguarding Action Plan. A national report is anticipated Spring/Summer 2022 in relation to the Past Cases Review (PCR) 2 undertaken at the Cathedral in conjunction with the Diocese. As reported in last year's Safeguarding Report, the reviewers were content that all necessary action has been taken in respect of the Cathedral.

Like most organisations in the voluntary sector, the Cathedral has suffered the loss of a significant number of volunteers. Many have not returned post COVID. There is no one reason for this but a few have felt unable, due to other time commitments, to complete the necessary safeguarding training. We remain committed to helping volunteers see the importance, not only of safeguarding, but a wider perspective on cultural change and an awareness of such issues as Domestic Abuse and Modern Slavery.

The majority, if not all, Cathedral staff and volunteers no longer question the necessity for safeguarding training regarding children and vulnerable adults. This represents a cultural change from five years ago. This is hopefully another sign of changing attitudes and a recognition of the importance of safeguarding as everyone's responsibility. However, it is not difficult to fall into old patterns and so we must remain prepared to admit mistakes and learn from them. This too is part of creating a healthy culture of openness.

The Book of Proverbs mandates that we "Speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the right of all who are vulnerable." Proverbs 31.8. This is part of the mission of the Church; to protect and nurture all people who are made in the divine image. Jesus, who by his incarnation shows us the heart of God, clearly demonstrated how we should behave and respond to the most at risk in our communities. The Church is to be a place where the transformational love of God is embodied. As part of this, it must be a safer place for those who are less powerful, amongst whom are children and any who are vulnerable, which at some point in our lives, includes all of us. We continue to make this a high priority at the Cathedral and understand there is still more to be done.



The Very Revd. Dr Philip Hesketh  
Dean of Rochester



Mr Simon Lace  
Chapter Clerk – Executive Director



The Revd. Canon Dr Gordon Giles  
Canon Chancellor and Safeguarding Lead