



Past Cases Review 2 Executive Summary September 2022

Introduction from the Acting Bishop of Blackburn

The Gospel is all about a God who, in Jesus, enters into the danger of the human condition in order to invite us into a place of eternal safety. The Church should therefore be a place that anticipates the safety of that Kingdom through the quality of its relationships and through its care for the vulnerable, the marginalised and the broken.

That is why it is such a tragedy that the Church of England has again and again been found wanting in recent years in its safeguarding culture and processes. For too many children and vulnerable adults, the Church has been a place not of safety but of danger; while a culture of cover-up has meant that too many of these survivors have been multiply re-abused and retraumatised.

The huge and complex PCR2 process across the entire Church of England including all 42 Dioceses has felt, in some respects, like an Examination of Conscience. Thousands of records and files kept by Parishes and the Diocese have been thoroughly re-examined to ensure that nothing that might give rise for concern about the behaviours and attitudes of clergy and church officers has been missed.

Whilst, in our case, the number of referrals was small and there was clear evidence of positive culture change, that will not make us complacent. We know that there is more work to do, and though PCR2 is an important stage in the journey, that journey is far from over.

I am very grateful to the Reviewers for the thoroughness of their work, to our Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel and its Chair, Simon Bass; the PCR Reference Group and to our DSO, Sharon Hassall and her team. Above all I am grateful to survivors and victims of abuse whose determination has been critical both in the inception of this important process and in monitoring its quality through our Survivor Consultative Group.

Examinations of Conscience are followed by repentance and by amendment of life. Whilst PCR2 is only one small part of a vast process to build a safer church, the recommendations it makes are important ones and we are committed to implementing them. We will continue to do all we can to ensure that the parishes, schools and chaplaincies of our Diocese are places where all can encounter the justice, the compassion and the safety of God's kingdom.

+Philip Burnley
(Acting Bishop of Blackburn)
October 2022

Background and introduction to PCR2

In 2007 the Church of England commissioned a Past Cases Review (PCR) following a number of high-profile court cases involving members of the clergy who were convicted of sexual abuse. The PCR 2007 looked at the handling by the Church of child protection cases and included examining clergy files (known as Blue Files) and church officer files to identify anyone who may have posed a risk of harm.

In 2015 concern was expressed about how the original PCR was conducted in terms of scope and methodology which led to a scrutiny review and, in 2019, to the National Safeguarding Team asking all 42 Dioceses, including the Diocese of Blackburn, to undertake another Past Cases Review (which became known as PCR2).

In common with all Dioceses, we followed the national guidelines set out in the 'Protocol and Practice Guidance PCR2' issued in July 2019 and the process was managed by a PCR2 Reference Group. Two independent reviewers were commissioned by the diocese to undertake the review. Both were experienced former senior police officers.

The Review commenced in July 2020 and was completed in January 2021. Over this period the country was in the midst of the Covid-19 outbreak. The pandemic, and especially the related series of lockdowns, affected the timescale for completion.

The scope of PCR2 was much wider than the previous review and included adult safeguarding concerns as well as child protection concerns. The specific 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 and where the alleged perpetrator is a clergy person, or other church officer; and to ensure these cases have been **independently reviewed**.
- To **ensure** all allegations of abuse of children, especially those recorded since the original PCR, have been handled appropriately and with proportionality to the level of risk identified and with the paramountcy principle¹ 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 principles² of adult safeguarding.
- To **ensure** that the support needs of known survivors have been considered. 'Responding well to those who have been sexually abused practice guidance (2011)'.
- To **ensure** that all safeguarding allegations have been referred to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers (DSAs) and are being/have been responded to in line with current safeguarding practice guidance. [Responding to,](#)

[assessing and managing concerns or allegations against church officers practice guidance \(2017\)](#)'.

- To **ensure** that cases meeting the relevant thresholds have been referred to statutory agencies.

The Blackburn Diocese PCR2

Whilst the reviewers' independence was maintained in carrying out the review working to the terms of reference, progress was monitored by a Reference Group, and Survivor Consultative Group.

Survivor Care

A Survivor Consultative Group was set up to ensure the support needs of known survivors have been considered and are reflected in the review and, through the participation of survivors, [a survivor care strategy](#) and a budget was set aside to provide survivors with counselling and other support.

The Review

Parish Returns

We wrote to all parishes and incumbents to request they provide details of any safeguarding cases in their parish. There was a 100% return and this resulted in nine new safeguarding cases, six related to children and three related to adults.

Diocesan Files

The independent reviewers examined 1089 files, including those on the 'Known Case List', which was created from the original PCR and added to over time.

These files were reviewed to see if there were any safeguarding concerns, including adult and child protection matters, against the standards and expectations when PCR2 was completed in 2021. Some of these files were extremely lengthy (200 pages) whilst others were scant.

The independent reviewers submitted 232 'Appendix D's' of which 73 related to children. A further 10 Appendix D's were about the vagueness of record keeping. The vast majority of these were about seeking clarity about the information presented in the files, rather than an actual safeguarding concern.

Three of these cases resulted in a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and six were referred to the police.

In relation to adults the review identified some safeguarding issues that had not been managed, such as clergy and church officers with past inappropriate behaviours whose risk had not been assessed (generally from 20 years or so previously).

The main safeguarding concerns highlighted by the review, were non-recent adult safeguarding concerns. The review showed that in recent years there was a distinct improvement in the identification and management of risk in adults.

The table below sets out the number of files reviewed:

Source	Number
Known Case List	120
Clergy Blue Files	235
Retired Clergy Files – No PTO living in Diocese	83
Retired Clergy Files – moved out of Diocese	35
PTO Archive Room	201
Overseas or Other Clergy Files	28
Other Denomination Files	23
Senior Clergy Files	6
CDM Boxed Files	25
Staff Files (DBE and DBF) and including leavers	159
Lay Reader Files	174
Volunteer Files	0
Total number of files reviewed	1089

The known case list derives from the original PCR and over time this has been extended to include other cases managed by the safeguarding team. The current total at the time of review is 120.

Themes

The key themes arising from the review of files are as follows ...

Boundaries

In relation to safeguarding children, issues were raised about non-recent cases highlighting youth workers not being aware of the boundaries of their role and also the management of sex offenders. The reviewers found evidence of mechanisms in place now which deal with these.

Where safeguarding adults was concerned the reviewers recognized this was outside the scope of the original PCR. As part of the PCR2 the reviewers noted a number of themes including bullying; inappropriate relationships; the use of the complaints and the CDM process; issues relating to human sexuality (a number of disclosures made during discernment and BAP process and at times of significant stress) as well as stalking and harassment; mental health; staff appraisals and the appointment process.

Survivors and victims

The reviewers found that survivors were at the front and centre of all of the safeguarding work within the Diocese and this was exemplified with the use of the Consultative Group for the PCR2 and the funded Survivors Strategy being in place.

There was some evidence to suggest that additional vulnerabilities of victims in past cases had been overlooked.

Historically the voice of the child hadn't always been heard, but there was evidence that this was likely to occur today.

Managing those who pose a risk

There were specific concerns around cases of domestic abuse. Some non-recent cases illustrated a 'pastoral care approach' to cases and failure to refer to appropriate agencies for investigation and management or to support victims with signposting to voluntary sector agencies. The focus had been on infidelity rather than domestic abuse.

In the past, the investment of time into the investigation of Clergy infidelity or Clergy marriage breakdowns seemed to outweigh investment made into the investigation of child or adult safeguarding issues. Reputational damage seemed to be a high cause for concern in most cases.

Managing risk

The reviewers identified issues linked to the movement/peripatetic nature of Clergy members and other church officers (organists, choir etc).

Case management and statutory agencies

The reviewers noted the importance of engaging with statutory agencies, good working relationships, sharing information and learning. They emphasized the requirement for robustness of links and sharing of information relating to paid chaplaincy/sector ministry.

Managing information

Safeguarding referral, investigation and management in respect of children and vulnerable adults is shown to be improved from the original PCR. The investment in the current Safeguarding Team and the impact this has made was noted by the reviewers.

The reviewers did highlight the potential fragmentation and missed information between departments across the Diocese where responsibility for files is split and file storage is in different places. In the past poor record-keeping was evident.

Safeguarding Team

The reviewers recognised the Safeguarding Team in post at the time of the review, led by an experienced DSA, ensured that safeguarding concerns are dealt with effectively and in a timely manner. A current area of good practice is in relation to the Clergy Current Status Letters (clergy references) which are written by the Diocesan Bishop and reviewed by the Safeguarding Team before they are sent to the receiving diocese.

Safer recruitment, learning and development

Safer recruitment was reviewed and it was highlighted there is a need to continue to ensure DBS checks are kept up-to-date and requests completed in full, with issues identified early. Also, it is important to continue ensuring training is kept up-to-date.

The bespoke safeguarding training of staff and introduction of Parish Safeguarding Officers within parishes has enhanced safeguarding understanding. This means that the Diocesan Safeguarding Team can deal swiftly with safeguarding concerns and operate more effectively in relation to concerns because they are consistently being referred at the early stages of disclosure and identification.

This is a credit to the Diocese, and the reviewers would like to place on record that

the Diocese seems to now be well placed with respect to (though limited to) those safeguarding issues that are referred into the Diocesan Safeguarding Team, at an early stage.

Support and accountability

The reviewers highlighted a number of areas of good practice including the external professional supervision arranged for the DSA, along with the good professional relationship between the DSA and the MAPPA Coordinator and Offender Management Teams from Police and Probation Services.

Culture

The reviewers found that historically there has been a reluctance to intervene in respect of safeguarding disclosures made by those in early ministry or on the discernment process. They concluded that understanding how to manage disclosures is key to the handling of these sensitive situations.

Similarly, in the past, there appears to have been a desire to increase pastoral support and/or professional counselling in response to safeguarding concerns which relate to individuals from within the church with a reluctance to share the information more widely with outside statutory or voluntary organisations. This resulted in keeping matters 'in-house'.

Pastoral care of clergy

There appeared to be a culture in the past that safeguarding issues relating to parish clergy especially towards those residing in vicarages, such as stalking and issues surrounding mental health behaviour, weren't given sufficient seriousness as safeguarding concerns as this 'came with the territory'. Additionally, the diocese was less inclined in the past to recognise the high stress levels parish-based clergy may encounter.

Recommendations

The reviewers made 16 themed recommendations, several of which were for the national Church. The local recommendations have been accepted in their entirety by the DSAP on behalf of the diocese, and have been incorporated within the business plan.

These have included addressing 'nil' returns where a parish is known to have had a safeguarding case; how to work more effectively with sexual offenders; better practice for youth workers; addressing inappropriate relationships through developing good professional boundaries; dealing with bullying allegations; understanding the impact of sexuality and gender issues on a person's mental health, managing foreign nationals who have been given PTO, stalking and harassment and domestic abuse.

The reviewers called for the survivor care strategy to be maintained going forward, for better management of chaplaincy services, and improved risk management through training, record keeping and safer recruitment and complaints system.

In addressing the safeguarding culture within the diocese the reviewers provided five

recommendations about disclosures and four about improving practice around mental health.

Conclusions

The reviewers commended the ongoing culture shift in terms of the importance of early identification of safeguarding concerns; the efficacy of consulting with the Safeguarding Team and taking their advice at the earliest possible opportunity.

The impact of early referral and investigation and management has been seen in recent cases as important and beneficial. This needs to continue and continue to be embedded within all parishes too.

The reviewers recommend continued and improved enactment, implementation and use of best practice approaches and policy with regard to safer recruitment; impact of training; improvements to recording and in closing any gaps of record handling or information sharing.

There was a clear link between improved safeguarding practice and management with the investment made into the Safeguarding Team. The reviewers recognised that the Safeguarding Team at the time of the review, led by an experienced DSA, appears to have been the single most effective resource the Diocese has to address safeguarding concerns being referred.

The Diocese of Blackburn is thankful for the work of thoroughness of the reviewers' work. The Diocesan Safeguarding Team will now implement the recommendations, alongside any others that result from the national report, to ensure the protection and wellbeing of all children, young people and vulnerable adults within the diocese.

Glossary of Terms

Appendix D	This is the name given to a template from the Protocol and Practice Guidance that the Independent Reviewers used to record any case concerns.
Archdeacon	A senior member of the clergy responsible for an area called an archdeaconry. They share the pastoral care of the clergy and do much practical, legal and administrative work.
Area Dean	An experienced priest who offers oversight to a group of churches in a 'deanery'. (Also known as a 'rural dean')
BAP	Bishops Appointments Team
Benefice	A group of parishes served by one incumbent (member of clergy)
Blue Files	Known colloquially as "blue" file. The personnel file for each deacon, priest or bishop that builds up over the length of their ministry and is kept at each stage by the Bishop's Office of whichever diocese they are currently ministering or residing in.
CDM	The Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 (as amended) provides a structure for dealing efficiently and fairly with formal complaints of misconduct against members of the clergy, other than in relation to matters involving doctrine, ritual or ceremonial.
Chaplain	A chaplain is a minister, priest or a lay representative attached to a secular institution such as a hospital, prison, military unit, school, business, police department, fire department, university, or private chapel.
DBE	Diocesan Board of Education
DBF	Diocesan Board of Finance
DBS	A Disclosure and Barring Service check can establish if someone has a criminal record
Diocese	The main administrative and pastoral area in the Church of England – often roughly coincides with local county boundaries. There are 42 dioceses.
DSA	A DSA is a paid worker who is professionally qualified and experienced in safeguarding practice. They advise and support the diocese on all safeguarding matters in line with the law and guidance both statutory and that issued by the House of Bishops. Their appointment, function and support are governed by the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors Regulations 2016. Please see Section 2 of Roles and Responsibilities of Church Office Holders and Bodies Practice Guidance (2017) for a full description of the role.
DSAP	The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel offers external expertise and advice to the diocesan bishop and their senior leadership team on the development and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements to ensure these arrangements are consistent with statutory requirements and House of Bishops' safeguarding policies and practice guidance. The panel is chaired by an independent lay person
Incumbents	The priest who is in charge of church life in a particular benefice. Depending on the parish his/her title may be Vicar, Rector or Priest-in-Charge
PTO (Permission to officiate)	A priest who has retired from full-time work but still wants occasionally to lead services at churches on behalf of other vicars who has been granted permission to officiate at services by the diocesan bishop.
Known case list	A list of all known safeguarding cases, including children and adults.
MAPPA	Multi-agency public protection arrangements

RAG rated	RAG (Red-Amber-Green) ratings, also known as 'traffic lighting,' are a popular project management method for reporting the status of actions. Green means that actions are progressing well, amber means that there may be issues that need to be addressed whilst red means that there are concerns that need to be resolved.
-----------	--