



(updated August 2023)

Independent audit of Bishopthorpe Palace Safeguarding arrangements

November 2020

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) conducted a review of the safeguarding arrangements at Bishopthorpe Palace. This document lists the conclusions of the report alongside the Bishopthorpe Action Plan, based on the questions posed to us by SCIE.

Conclusions of SCIE audit report at Bishopthorpe Palace

- The auditors agreed with all the aspects raised in the self-assessment completed by the Palace before the audit. There is much to be proud of as well as a shared view about what needs to happen to make sure that safeguarding is properly resourced and well supported.
- The Palace benefits from being a small and closely-knit team in which safeguarding is accepted as an important function and there is a collective will to do it well. The people who talked, formally or informally, with the auditors felt involved in a way forward and change was seen as a positive force.
- Progress since the arrival of the Provincial Safeguarding Advisor (PSA) has been rapid, as discussed in paragraph 4.3.9. The auditors were struck by the confidence of focus group members, that they know what to look for and how to respond, feel able to ask questions and support each other. Staff value the annual training they share and the new debriefing sessions on offer. In the focus group, everyone contributed and there was no hint of it feeling unsafe to express an opinion.
- The timing of the audit was fortuitous as the new Archbishop has been in post for long enough to have started forming action plans and the Chief of Staff has not yet moved on (a planned move).
- Impressive attention has been paid right across the staff group to developing and embedding good working practices that promote the idea of safeguarding being 'everybody's business', e.g. the aide memoires that guide people when taking sensitive phone calls, the practical step of having a 'flag' to raise so that others know to be quiet, and the safeguarding debrief offered by the PSA that not only supports the individual but also identifies training and other issues which need to be addressed. Record keeping is excellent.
- Policies and procedures are a mixture of Church-wide and Palace-specific. The latter are relevant, clear, and developed from experience of what is needed and where gaps have been identified.

- The role of the PSA and the strong working relationship between the PSA and the Provincial Chaplain have made a tangible difference to the handling of Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM) complaints that have a safeguarding aspect.
- Feedback from Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors (DSAs) and other diocesan staff across the province is that the PSA role has been very helpful and supportive although there is recognition that less time is now available for that aspect of the role. The auditors also heard similarly from survivors to this effect.
- The annual training days organised by the PSA are highly valued and have made a tangible impact on practice.
- In terms of areas to address, the auditors agreed with those identified in the self-assessment, particularly regarding PSA capacity, and would add that this is not helped by the dual accountability of the role in relation to National Safeguarding Team and province.
- The auditors understood the anxiety about the decrease in focus on Bishopthorpe, as the Palace needs to lead by example and systems must be strong so that the chance of mistakes is minimised. The auditors' view is that there should be a safeguarding adviser based at the Palace and with responsibility within the Palace going forward.
- The Archbishop and his staff need to have an awareness of how opinions expressed and actions taken at Bishopthorpe will be seen in the wider world, and the impact of negative publicity on safeguarding and on survivors, both those who are known and those who are still unknown. This feels particularly relevant in the context of the current Past Cases Review 2 and the argument for transparency, to differentiate it from previous past case reviews that were unpublished or not published in full. And in the context of the IICSA report, change needs to be made at a purposeful rate. It seems right that the Archbishop has robust safeguarding support close to hand.
- The Archbishop in his role as the leading bishop (first among equals) in the Northern Province with responsibility for providing leadership and direction in promoting a safer church, is in a unique position to set the tone and model the nature of the Church's relationship with survivors of abuse by clergy and people in Church-related roles.
- The safeguarding update meetings work well but might be expanded and would benefit from terms of reference setting out what the meeting is for, what gets discussed and how agreed actions are tracked.
- In the feedback given to the Palace, the auditors gave the last words to the survivors they spoke with before the audit. The themes that emerged for the Palace and for the Church as a whole were:
 - They want to be respected, acknowledged and not fobbed off.
 - They want an apology where one is needed.
 - Good support should be readily available, without time and cost limits
 - The Church needs to get the basics right and have clarity about processes.
 - The Church needs to 'learn from people like me'.

Summary of questions to consider and Bishopthorpe Action Plan

- 1. *How are the perceived and actual benefits of bespoke, familiar safeguarding support to the dioceses of the Northern Province through the PSA located at the Palace going to be maintained, alongside the benefits of a centralised duty function provided by NST?***

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT:

- Since the SCIE report was written, the centralised duty function provided by the National Safeguarding Team, has become established and as the report identifies allows for a strengthened, streamlined and uniform approach.
- There continued to be a benefit of having the Provincial Safeguarding Advisor based in the Northern Province who can be deployed relatively easily by the National Safeguarding Team to visit dioceses or attend to specific safeguarding situations. Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers have raised no concerns on this new approach.

COMPLETION DATE: Completed Summer 2022

- 2. *Is there a role for the Palace in gauging and ensuring adequate capacity for the Northern Province vis-à-vis wider demands on the duty team?***

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT:

- Since the introduction of the centralised duty function, we are not aware of any adverse issues from Northern Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers. The National Safeguarding Team have also introduced a pilot for a regional model, this arises from recommendation 1 & 8 of IICSA. This includes a whole strand on modelling and support requirements for Diocesan Safeguarding Teams.

COMPLETION DATE: Completed Summer 2022

3. *What are the options for providing an advice function for dioceses of the Northern Province that does not require the level of safeguarding expertise of the Provincial Safeguarding Advisor*

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT:

- In addition to the Provincial Safeguarding Advisor, when required the Chief of Staff, Deputy Chief of Staff and the Chaplain often signpost senior clergy and office holders across the Northern Province to appropriate sources of advice.
- Furthermore, whilst accepting these roles are not safeguarding professionals they always have the option to seek advice from the National Safeguarding Team casework manager and the wider NST casework team who provide a duty officer Monday - Friday.

COMPLETION DATE: Completed Summer 2022

4. *What should be the role of the Archbishop in setting new standards for engagement with and responses to survivors of abuse within the church?*

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT:

- The Archbishop is very conscious of his leadership role and the way in which he himself engages with victims and survivors of abuse. He seeks to lead by example and is aware that he has an obligation to model best practice and through his example, encourage others to do likewise.
- In terms of policy, this is led at a national level. The appropriate policy is "Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse" with an allied implementation plan. The role of the Archbishop is to ensure compliance with national policy and practice guidance.
- In addition to the Archbishop contributing and sharing his views as national policy is developed, Bishopthorpe Palace staff represent the Archbishop at key meetings such as the National Safeguarding Steering Group and the National Safeguarding Panel which acts as a further mechanism for ensuring the Archbishop's views are reflected.

COMPLETION DATE: Whilst policy is set and reviewed at a national level, through his meetings and interactions with survivors and victims, the Archbishop and his team will continue to report and reflect back to the National Safeguarding Team. In addition, the Archbishop and staff at Bishopthorpe Palace are always keen to hear from survivors and victims on ways we as a team can improve.

5. *How proactive should the Archbishop be in seeking out survivors who feel they have been let down by the church and rectifying past failings?*

PROGRESS SINCE AUDIT:

- The Archbishop will always seek to respond positively to those who share their experiences of the abuse they have suffered and the manner in which the church has responded to them.
- Meetings with survivors and victims take place on a regular basis, supported by appropriate staff and the Provincial Safeguarding Advisor in order to ensure these aren't superficial meetings but are carefully considered to ensure survivors and victims are heard and understood.
- The need to be proactive is important. However, this must be balanced against any risk of retraumatising a victim or survivor and of paramount importance is a victim and survivor centred approach.
- The recent comprehensive Past Case Review 2 report and action plan indicates a further continued commitment.

COMPLETION DATE: The Archbishop will continue to meet with survivors and victims as mentioned above. Whilst it isn't always possible to rectify past failings, the Archbishop continues to strive to improve the trust and confidence that victims and survivors have in the Church's safeguarding practices.

6. *To what extent should the Archbishop of York be actively working to address unresolved complaints and criticism by survivors about the handling of past CDM cases which relate to them, pending the outcome of the current review of the CDM process?*

- Throughout the review of the CDM process, the Archbishop has consistently contributed his view on how this might be improved, reflecting what victims and survivors have said about this.
- Undoubtedly as the new Clergy Conduct Measure works through its synodical stages, there will be a further opportunity to consider these questions. It will be important to ensure the new processes have appropriate feedback loops within them to ensure the experiences of all involved contribute to a continual commitment to improving the process.
- Undoubtedly, individuals will continue to raise particular concerns with the Archbishop which he will always seek to pass on to those with responsibility for any safeguarding or discipline processes.

COMPLETION DATE: The Clergy Conduct Measure began the Synodical process at the July 2023 group of sessions.

7. *Given his spiritual leadership role, is there a role for the Archbishop in championing the need to keep abuse survivors at the heart of any complaints process they initiate?*

- We hope it is apparent from other reflections that the Archbishop takes seriously his role as a spiritual leader and will always endeavour to use his office to ensure that victims and survivors are placed at the heart of any process involving them.
- Given the role the archbishop has in the CDM process, it is important that he remains impartial but this should not be interpreted as any kind of disregard for the pastoral needs of all involved. With the CDM cases in which the Archbishop is the decision maker, he has a duty to ensure timely pastoral care is offered to all concerned.
- It should be emphasised that pastoral care for victims and survivors is an integral part of the CDM process, it is tailored and bespoke to meet the needs of the individual and we will always strive to work with an individual to ensure we find the care which meets their particular needs.

COMPLETION DATE: This work is ongoing and crucial that it remains at the heart of ongoing complaints processes.

8. *Given the public commitment by the Church's leadership to 'do better' with regard to safeguarding, particularly in response to survivors of abuse, how critical will the role of safeguarding advisor to the Archbishop be in contributing to this?*

- The role of the Provincial Safeguarding Adviser is crucial in terms of providing professional safeguarding advice to the Archbishop. This ensures that any interaction between the Archbishop and victims and survivors is informed and in the preparation of such meetings, the approach is caring, sensitive, thoughtful and professional.
- In his formal meetings with victims and survivors the Archbishop will be supported by appropriate colleagues and safeguarding professionals.
- The Archbishop is fully cognisant of the responsibility, power and influence his role is afforded and uses this to maximise support to survivors wherever possible.

COMPLETION DATE: This work is ongoing and we will continue to seek best practice for responding and listening to survivors and victims and learn from them.

9. How might the Palace, working with the National Safeguarding Team and safeguarding colleagues in Lambeth Palace, further develop a joint approach to safeguarding which clarifies accountability, promotes consistency across the two provinces, increases resilience and allows for an appropriate balance to be achieved between Palace and National Safeguarding Team focussed work?

- The two Palaces and National Safeguarding Team work closely together. We have a regular meeting to discuss operational and strategic safeguarding issues that impact on both palaces. This meeting allows us to assess progress, look at the requirements of either Palace and ensures clarity around any next steps. This meeting also acts as an opportunity to seek advice from one another and share good practice. Joint training and development days looking at safeguarding for both Palaces is currently being discussed.
- When the Lambeth Palace SCIE audit is completed, we will assess if any learning from their audit can be equally applied at Bishopthorpe Palace and add anything to this action plan.

COMPLETION DATE: Lambeth Palace have published their SCIE audit and once their action plan is completed, members of the Bishopthorpe team will meet with the safeguarding lead at Lambeth Palace to look at areas where we can learn from each other.

10. How can safeguarding leadership by the Archbishops be strengthened, including coming to a common position? What is the Archbishop of York's role in achieving this?

- The two Archbishops work closely together as leaders of the Church of England and are committed to ensuring safeguarding is both resourced and implemented at every level within the Church.
- Regular meetings between senior safeguarding colleagues, the lead bishop for safeguarding and other national church institution leaders, afford the Archbishops an opportunity to question, challenge and reflect on the effectiveness of the church's safeguarding work.

COMPLETION DATE: This will continue as a constant active task for the Archbishop.

11. How will the job description of the new Chief of Staff be drawn up so that it takes the practice of safeguarding forward as the Archbishop would wish it?

- The roles of the Chief of Staff and the Deputy Chief of Staff are ultimately responsible for safeguarding within Bishopthorpe Palace. In addition, they work with the Provincial Safeguarding Advisor, National Safeguarding Team and where required, Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors and Diocesan Bishops. The Provincial Registrar is also available to offer legal advice. Good communication with these key stakeholders, referring, and implementing agreed policies, ensuring good practice and keeping survivors at the heart of decisions is crucial.
- Between them, the Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff sit on key internal governance meetings including the National Safeguarding Steering Group and the National Safeguarding Panel, which not only allows them to ensure 'the voice' of the Archbishop is present, it ensures key discussions and decisions are fed back to the Archbishop.

COMPLETION DATE: This will continue as a constant, active task for the team at Bishopthorpe.

12. *Are there ways in which the Safeguarding update meeting could support the further development of safeguarding practice within the Palace and spread ownership across the staff team?*

- The safeguarding update meeting is designed to be a regular opportunity for the Provincial Safeguarding Advisor to catch up with a number of staff at Bishopthorpe in order for them to be made aware of current cases and on matters which need immediate attention and action.
- In addition, the Provincial Safeguarding Advisor also attends the monthly senior staff meeting which has a standing item on safeguarding and is an opportunity for more wider discussions, a chance to think creatively and ensuring there is clarity across roles.
- The Provincial Safeguarding Advisor is also physically present at Bishopthorpe on a minimum of two out of the four weekly working days. This ensures staff have access to the PSA whilst simultaneously the PSA has access to the senior management and wider Bishopthorpe team.

COMPLETION DATE: Completed Autumn 2022.

13. *How might an external, independent system be established to provide oversight of disciplinary processes and complaints against higher status clergy and contribute to improvements in safeguarding processes and outcomes?*

- A review of CDM has taken place and will be working its way through the General Synod in due course. This is appropriately a question for that review and its processes and undoubtedly be one for the General Synod to reflect upon as it considers those proposals.

COMPLETION DATE: The Clergy Conduct Measure began the Synodical process at the July 2023 group of sessions.

14. *What steps need to be taken to ensure that the plans for achieving a significant increase in visitors to the Palace are accompanied by a realistic risk assessment to ensure that all are kept safe?*

- All Bishopthorpe Palace staff including those supervising events are recruited as per safer recruitment guidance and receive appropriate and regular safeguarding training.
- As part of the Archbishop's wish to open the Palace more widely, the Palace and Events Manager is working with the Provincial Safeguarding Advisor on an updated policy to ensure the safety of all visitors alongside those who live and work at the Palace. Once completed, this will be part of the Bishopthorpe policies and distributed and made accessible where required.

COMPLETION DATE: This policy has been updated and now forms part of a suite of local policies at Bishopthorpe Palace and will be kept under review at regular intervals.

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