

Conference helps us to enhance safeguarding

THE cathedral has hosted our diocese's first safeguarding conference. More than 100 clergy, parish safeguarding officers and congregation members heard from specialist speakers as they learnt more about how to keep children, young people and vulnerable adults safe in our churches.

Bishop Jonathan was among those who gathered in our cathedral to listen to experts from charities, councils and the NHS, who talked about healthy safeguarding cultures, modern slavery, dementia, online abuse, grooming and spiritual abuse. Among those who spoke was survivor Caroline Kindell, who gave an account of her personal experiences of abuse.

It was also a chance for parish safeguarding officers to compare notes with each other, as they implement policies and procedures that aim to keep people safe during church activities.

Among those who spoke was Neil Connolly, operational lead for child exploitation at Hampshire County Council's Children's Services, who shared details of their work relating to child exploitation and trafficking. Jaki Metcalfe, safeguarding education and improvement lead for NHS Hampshire, led a session on understanding and developing organisational culture, and how important it is to deal with toxicity in the workplace, at all levels.

And Justin Humphreys, who co-wrote *Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse* with Dr Lisa Oakley and is chief executive of



Speakers (l to r): Eleanor Spencer of Safe Spaces, Justin Humphreys of 31:8, Kelly Huggett of PSCP and Neil Connolly from Hampshire County Council

the safeguarding charity 31:8, told delegates how church leaders and others can use coercion, a power imbalance and their spiritual authority to manipulate people. He suggested ways that churches could create safer and healthier cultures to prevent this happening.

Our safeguarding team are hoping to make this conference an annual event.

Meanwhile, the most comprehensive safeguarding review in the history of our diocese has been completed. Independent reviewers sifted through decades of paperwork to help our diocese to deal appropriately with any outstanding safeguarding concerns from previous years.

The comprehensive review of every single personnel file held by our diocese took place from April 2021 until March 2022 – as part of a

national project undertaken by the whole Church. It was called 'Past Cases Review 2' as a similar exercise took place in 2007-09.

Four independent reviewers were commissioned to carry out the Past Cases Review 2 in our diocese, because they had backgrounds in the police, social care or public protection, and no previous link with our diocese or C of E locally.

They were given access to every past and current personnel file held by the diocese, digital and physical. That meant examining thousands of items of paperwork about clergy, ministers, church officers, paid staff and volunteers working in all C of E churches across south-east Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

They also met, wrote to, or spoke to some survivors. Details on www.portsmouth.anglican.org/pcr2