

# Past Case Review (PCR2): Executive Summary

## Background

The Church of England is committed to promoting excellence in safeguarding practice, and to keeping children, young people and vulnerable adults as safe as possible when they are in our care. The Church's training, policies and culture have been transformed over the past decades, with an emphasis on putting the needs of survivors uppermost, and being as transparent as possible.

As part of that commitment, the Church of England's Past Case Review (PCR2) aims to examine whether historic and current safeguarding concerns in the Church were (and are) being dealt with effectively. Independent reviewers were appointed to scrutinise in detail all paper and digital personnel files held by all dioceses and national C of E bodies, to consider whether any outstanding safeguarding concerns remained and, if so, whether they had been handled appropriately.

This involved both adult and child safeguarding, and the review covered clergy, lay ministers, church officers and volunteers working with children and adults in our churches. This independent review was also an opportunity for each diocese to undertake a comprehensive re-examination of its safeguarding practices.

The protocol and guidance for PCR2 were written and circulated by the C of E's National Safeguarding Team in July 2019. It was called 'PCR2' as it followed a similar (but less comprehensive) past cases review that took place in 2007-09. The aim was that, by the end of the PCR2 process, any file that could contain a concern, allegation or conviction relating to abusive behaviour will have been identified, read and analysed by independent safeguarding professionals. Then it would be possible to state that all known safeguarding cases have been properly managed; the needs of any known survivors have been considered and support offered; and that all identified risks have been assessed and mitigated as far as possible.

The national guidance indicated that the full PCR2 report compiled for each diocese – which contains detailed case studies that the Church can learn from – would be given to the C of E's National Safeguarding Team (NST) and to each diocese's Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP). Because the full PCR2 reports for each diocese contain information that could potentially identify survivors (even in redacted form), it wasn't envisaged that these full reports would be made public. Instead executive summaries such as this one have been compiled to indicate the nature of the recommendations.

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## Our diocese

In the Diocese of Portsmouth, our PCR2 review took place from April 2021 until March 2022, and included up to four independent reviewers examining and analysing thousands of personnel files relating to individual clergy, lay ministers, church officers, paid staff and volunteers.

These independent reviewers were appointed because they had backgrounds in the police, social care, or public protection, and had no previous link with our diocese or the Church of England locally. They were given access to every single past and current personnel file held by the diocese – not just those relating to known safeguarding concerns. They also met, wrote to, or spoke to some survivors to ask them about their experiences, and whether they were satisfied with the diocese's response – both at the time and since.

Although this was outside the official scope of the PCR2 review, the Diocese of Portsmouth's independent reviewers also examined the files of those clergy, ministers, staff and church officers who are now deceased. This meant finding and scrutinising all personnel files that exist, dating back to the creation of our diocese in 1927. Our diocese also wrote to all organisations where a chaplain would serve (hospitals, university, Navy etc) to ask if safeguarding concerns had ever been raised about those serving as chaplains.

Additionally, the Bishop of Portsmouth wrote to every parish in our diocese to ask them to identify any current or previous safeguarding concern that had ever been raised. A response was received from every single parish, and every concern was prioritised and added to ongoing casework where appropriate.

The PCR2 process in our diocese was overseen by a PCR2 Reference Group, which included representatives independent from the diocese. The group was involved in making decisions regarding the whole PCR2 process, including the scope of the review and the logistics involved in carrying it out.

The full Diocese of Portsmouth PCR2 report was submitted to the C of E's National Safeguarding Team (NST) in March 2022, and then to Portsmouth's Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP). The DSAP is a group that is chaired independently and includes members from external agencies such as the police, social services and a survivors' representative. It is the DSAP that will hold the diocese to account, in terms of acting on the recommendations made.

## Recommendations on individual issues

As the independent reviewers discovered any concerns they felt had not been handled appropriately (based on the safeguarding practice at the time, or the revised safeguarding

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practice now), they raised individual reports into cases of concern, including recommendations for further action they thought appropriate. This could range from filing paperwork correctly or altering a record on a database, through to liaising with the police or statutory agencies regarding potential current risk. In any case where urgent action was needed to minimise any ongoing risk to children or vulnerable adults, that action was taken as soon as possible. That involved creating a 'core group' of professionals, which bring together diocesan and parish representatives to discuss concerns and recommend action to the bishop.

In some cases, the concerning activity by a minister or church officer actually took place in a separate diocese, before they became involved with our diocese. Similarly, other dioceses identified concerns relating to their ministers and officers that had taken place in our diocese. In those relevant cases, a joint core group would be set up to enable liaison between both dioceses and any statutory agencies involved. Where the concern related to a national C of E body, our diocese informed the National Safeguarding Team.

The independent reviewers recognised the use of small core groups has been ongoing for some years, in line with good practice. They also recognised that our diocese already uses independent risk assessors to examine any risks posed by an individual and to recommend action to mitigate that risk.

One of the most significant observations made by the independent reviewers was the under-resourcing of the Diocese of Portsmouth safeguarding team, especially after some posts became vacant from May 2021. They were pleased to see that – even before their report was even submitted – a new safeguarding manager, a safeguarding trainer with relevant experience, and a half-time safeguarding adviser had been recruited by February 2022. That team was further expanded in September 2022 with the addition of a third safeguarding adviser and a second safeguarding administrator to the team.

## Good practice

A range of good practice was found and noted in detail in the main PCR2 report. The examples include:

- Prompt referral regarding safeguarding concerns to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser;
- Effective referrals and good communication with multi-agency bodies;
- Examples of good investigation into issues;
- Excellent support to victims and survivors, in the main;
- Good safeguarding statement and a commitment to renewal of safeguarding training for retired clergy.

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## Themes and lessons learned

However, the independent reviewers also discovered some common themes and some lessons that can be learned for the future:

- The need for the safeguarding adviser/manager to be involved in the formal and informal complaints process about clergy to assess them for safeguarding concerns;
- The limited knowledge in the diocese about managing allegations and processes regarding those 'in a position of trust';
- Some limited or absent safeguarding record-keeping;
- The limited knowledge about domestic abuse.

## Recommendations

Among the overall recommendations made by the independent reviewers were:

- More resources devoted to safeguarding overall (a recommendation that has already been addressed);
- More effective recording of details of incidents, actions and outcomes;
- Specific learning from the PCR2 process;
- Better knowledge, skills and training across the diocese in key areas;
- An emphasis on safer recruitment of church officers;
- More involvement by the safeguarding team in specific complaints against clergy.

They also recommended a focus on developing these areas, and progressing work where there is an existing underpinning framework in place:

- Working with secular agencies, such as the police, local authorities and public bodies;
- Developing diocesan policy and standards further, to underpin the existing national church policy;
- The governance of safeguarding issues;
- Work with licensed lay ministers (Readers).

These recommendations were turned into an action plan after the PCR2 report was originally submitted in March 2022. Each item either has been or is being addressed, with independent scrutiny provided by the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP).

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## Response by the Bishop of Portsmouth



As diocesan bishop, my first priority is to promote excellence in safeguarding practice, and to keep people in our Christian communities as safe as possible. I want to see the values, practices and priorities embodied in Jesus Christ lived out in the ongoing life of the Christian community.

I welcome PCR2 and its recommendations. I want to pay tribute in particular to those survivors who worked with us during this process, helping us to shape a more appropriate response to safeguarding concerns.

This diocese has worked hard in previous years to train those who lead and serve in our Christian communities in good safeguarding practice, to recruit safeguarding officers in every parish, and to deal with issues as they arise.

Our commitment to excellence in safeguarding practice must now become a permanent part of our culture, our values, thinking and behaviours. In the light of PCR2, we have put an action plan in place and are determined to see good practice implemented at every level.

In the Diocese of Portsmouth, our desire is to become a 'Kingdom community': a safe place for everyone; a place in which the life-transforming radiance of Jesus Christ can be found, experienced and discerned. Addressing PCR2 with resolve and determination is another step on the road to becoming all that we desire to be, in Jesus' name.

## Response by the chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel, Kerry Young

The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) includes safeguarding professionals, completely independent of the Church of England, including representatives from statutory agencies, such as social care and police, and an advocate for victims and survivors.

The main purpose of the DSAP is to provide independent governance, scrutiny, advice and expertise on safeguarding policies, procedures and practices to the bishop and other senior clergy and officials, including the diocesan lead for safeguarding (the Diocesan Secretary) and the diocesan safeguarding team.



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The DSAP provided the same level of independent governance and scrutiny throughout the Diocese of Portsmouth PCR2 process, in the form of a PCR2 Reference Group, through which the panel were consulted regarding all aspects of the review.

As DSAP chair I would like to provide assurance regarding the thoroughness and vigour of the Diocese of Portsmouth review. The Diocese chose to extend the PCR2 to include the review of the personnel files of all clergy, past and present, including deceased clergy; a decision that was at the discretion of the diocese.

The PCR2 report includes numerous examples of good practice and recommendations for improvement, some specific to the Diocese of Portsmouth, and some relating to more general, national Church of England matters. The Diocese of Portsmouth responded, throughout the course of the review, to any pressing matters raised. They also created an 'action plan', endorsed by DSAP, to address issues raised and recommendations made. This action plan will be monitored by DSAP and formally reviewed every three months. This process provides an ongoing level of independent scrutiny of the response of the Diocese of Portsmouth to the report.

## Conclusion

The independent reviewers for the PCR2 review in our diocese concluded that leadership was key in safeguarding, for the Church to convey to victims, survivors and the general public that safeguarding is a priority for the Church of England. The emphasis for change must come from the top, from archbishops, bishops and those in the most senior positions.

They suggested that learning the appropriate lessons from the PCR2 review would be one example of this. They highlighted that there is good practice, but there is more work to do in terms of leadership and governance to improve safeguarding practice, both nationally and in our diocese.

Our independent reviewers found the diocese to be responsive to safeguarding learning. When relevant learning from other dioceses about good practice was shared, this was implemented during the review. It concluded that training provision in the diocese was efficient when there was a trainer in post.

However, there were examples of varying levels of safeguarding knowledge, confidence and awareness of potential risk, especially relating to the more historical cases. And the absence of information in some records generated questions about follow-up action and outcomes – it didn't mean no action had been taken, just that it was not documented.

The themes and recommendations identified by the independent reviewers assisted our diocese to produce an action plan for safeguarding assurance. The independent reviewers were also positive about the skill and expertise of existing safeguarding staff and those who

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had been recruited during the PCR2 process – commenting that the team feels more robust, solid and consolidated with the current blended skill set.

They were also pleased to see the relatively recent appointment of the DSAP chair, as someone with a background in public protection, who challenges the diocese as appropriate.

Since the PCR2 report has been completed and submitted in March 2022, work has already begun to implement those issues identified by the action plan, including changes to safeguarding policy and practice, the governance of safeguarding, and a revised survivor strategy.

Bishop Jonathan makes it clear that safeguarding takes precedence over all other areas of the Church's work, because without good safeguarding procedures and policies, all other ministry and mission becomes pointless. The PCR2 review has provided a new impetus for this vital work in our diocese.

For more information about safeguarding in our diocese, please see:

[www.portsmouth.anglican.org/safeguarding](http://www.portsmouth.anglican.org/safeguarding).

*Diocese of Portsmouth PCR2 Reference Group  
October 2022*

## Appendix: reporting a concern

*If you have information about a safeguarding situation where a child or adult is in immediate danger, or requires immediate attention, call emergency services on 999.*

*Any safeguarding concerns must be reported to your Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) and/or Incumbent as soon as possible. If you need to speak to the diocesan safeguarding team please click [here](#).*

*Parish safeguarding concerns should be reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team at [safeguarding@portsmouth.anglican.org](mailto:safeguarding@portsmouth.anglican.org) using the form below.*

[Safeguarding Report Form](#)  
[Responding to Safeguarding Concerns Flowchart](#)

### **Out of Hours**

*The Diocese have commissioned [thirtyone:eight](#) to offer OUT OF HOURS AND HOLIDAY COVER when safeguarding staff are unavailable. They can be contacted on 0303 003 1111 during these times. During such times, the Diocesan Safeguarding Team will ensure that information about such arrangements is available to parishes that may need safeguarding advice in their absence. An Information Sharing Agreement between the two organisations will allow for diocesan safeguarding advisers to receive a copy of the advice that thirtyone:eight may offer the parish church/caller to ensure appropriate follow up and support. Please make sure when contacting thirtyone:eight that you inform them that you are calling from the Diocese of Portsmouth.*

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