

Bishop's House  
Abbey Square  
Chester  
CH1 2JD

January 2020

## **Safeguarding - A review of all past and current files (PCR2)**

Dear Sisters and Brothers.

In 2007, the Church of England commissioned a national Past Case Review (PCR) which sought to look at the handling by the Church of child protection cases over many years.

Over the next few months, our diocese, and other dioceses of the Church of England, will be conducting a second Past Case Review (PCR2). An Independent Reviewer will be looking at our safeguarding files, and files relating to church officers, including those for clergy and lay staff, to reassure us that all safeguarding matters have been reported and dealt with appropriately.

In his capacity as the Deputy Bishop for Safeguarding, Bishop Mark Sowerby writes:

*"The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." [John 1.5]*

*St John the Evangelist, like St Luke and St Paul, uses the imagery of light and darkness, where darkness represents concealment and shame, whereas light represents the revelation of truth. Darkness hides things that are forgotten, uncomfortable or broken and have been 'put out of the way' in cellars or behind closed doors. They may be things that are inconvenient or of which we are ashamed or afraid. In darkness they lie where we can forget about them, but Christ is The Light of The World and brings to light things now hidden in darkness. He brings to light those deeds that have been concealed and the victims of sins who have been silenced or kept from view. The Light shines for those who need justice and healing and upon those misdeeds that have injured them.*

*Allowing light to shine on what has been hidden is a first step towards healing, not only for those who have been abused, but for those whose consciences are, or ought to be, troubled by those sins they have buried away beyond the sight of others. Sometimes it will take an external prompting for those things to be opened to the light of day and to the light of Christ but with such prompting may begin the path to penitence and forgiveness, the path to healing of long-hidden wounds.*

*Through the Past Cases Review, we are asking you to help shine a revealing light on any instances of abuse that have occurred in your benefice and to help ensure that everything that ought to be brought into the light has been. Shining a light on what has hurt or*

*frightened someone is a matter of justice for those who have been victims; sometimes it may also prevent further harm and sometimes it may be the first step towards healing. With that in mind, we thank you for your cooperation in working towards a safer Church.*

+Mark

As part of the PCR2, I am writing to you to ask you to check all your parish records to ensure that all instances of concern about \*church officers, either non-recent or current, have been reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA). I recognise that you will have records that will extend for many decades and would ask that, in order to meet PCR2 requirements, all records available are checked, this should include archives and, in many cases, will go back to prior the 1940s.

**Any matters which have not already been reported should be reported immediately to our Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser by email: [pauline.butterfield@chester.anglican.org](mailto:pauline.butterfield@chester.anglican.org) or by calling 01928 718834 or out of office hours 07703 800031.**

During our planning of this review, we considered where local information may currently be located which could potentially be of interest to the review. A suggested list of records is included in the support documentation with this letter, but this is not exhaustive, and I recognise you may have differing systems of formally and informally recording information locally across the diocese.

When reviewing local information in preparation to submit your parish Declaration, I would advise that no burden of proof is required to be satisfied prior to you sharing this information and that information does not have to be complete to meet the threshold for submission. Indeed, sometimes a mere mention or sentence relating to a concern is all that you may be able to locate in your records despite exhaustive searches. This information should still be shared and identified even if it is the only reference to the issue you were able to obtain during your local records examination.

Please note that all parishes are required to fully complete a return, irrespective of if they have information to share or not. Those who have undertaken a complete check of all their records and can find no information they feel is appropriate to this review, should annotate this on the attached Declaration form and on Table 1A to provide written confirmation of such.

### **How can I access further support?**

Copies of this letter and further support materials are available on the diocesan website at the following address: [www.chester.anglican.org/PCR2](http://www.chester.anglican.org/PCR2), and I would ask that you regularly revisit this webpage as further information and support is made available.

Any questions regarding this process or your requirements within it should initially be directed to: [PCR2@chester.anglican.org](mailto:PCR2@chester.anglican.org).

It is important that we are made aware of any concerns related to church officers and to this end, I would ask that you inform your staff and congregations about the content of this email during meetings and worship. Please do display a copy of this e-mail and support information on your noticeboards. An article for your parish magazine, copy for your parish website, and posts for your social media accounts will be made available to you via the webpage above.

### Next steps

- Check all parish records including archives for as long as you have held records for all known incidents of concern about the behaviour of all church officers\* in the parish.
- Report any previously unreported incidents to the DSA immediately.
- Complete the attached Table 1A for each parish (we cannot accept one form for the whole benefice), detailing all known cases of concern.
- Complete the attached parish Declaration form (we cannot accept one for the whole benefice).
- Send the completed Table 1A and Declaration form for each parish to the PCR2 Independent Reviewer **by 28 February 2020**. We would encourage you to complete your return electronically and email it to [PCR2@chester.anglican.org](mailto:PCR2@chester.anglican.org). If you are unable to do so, a handwritten submission can be made to *FAO Suzanne Cottrell, PCR2 Independent Reviewer, Church House, 5500 Daresbury Park, Daresbury, Warrington WA4 4GE*.
- If after the submission of the Declaration, any other relevant information regarding historical concerns comes to light, please do not hesitate to submit it to the DSA or PCR2 Independent Reviewer. All new concerns should be referred to the DSA as per House of Bishops' Policy

*\*A church officer includes all clergy, including those with PTO and clergy such as hospital, school and prison chaplains, retired clergy, and deceased clergy. It also includes Readers, licensed lay workers, diocesan and parish lay employees and volunteers whose role includes (or has included) direct involvement with children and vulnerable adults.*

I would conclude that we all recognise that safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults is significantly more embedded in our daily practice, both locally and nationally, and as such, responses to historical allegations which may have been considered appropriate at the time, may, in the light of new guidance require further consideration, and I ask for your support with this matter.

There are many demands on your time, I know, and this request will add to them in a way that may feel onerous. So please know that I am really grateful for your understanding and cooperation in undertaking this essential work which will help to ensure that our churches are a safer place for everyone.

With much appreciation and every good wish.

J Keith  
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