

**Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel**

**Background Paper**

**Introduction**

The requirement for Dioceses to have a Diocesan Safeguard Advisory Panel (DSAP) is stated in the document: Key Roles and Responsibilities of Church Office Holders and Bodies Practice Guidance, as produced by the Church of England National Church Institutions and adopted by each individual diocese. The membership is determined in the same practice guidance.

The role of Independent Chair of the Diocesan safeguarding Advisory panel (DSAP), appointed by the Bishop of Chester, is important for ensuring that safeguarding provision within the Diocese is subject to robust and independent scrutiny. The Chair acts as a critical friend, supporting and encouraging as appropriate, but also providing challenge where necessary. The appointment of an Independent Chair shows the commitment of the Church to ensuring that safeguarding is handled in a transparent and professional way. For this reason the Independent Chair must not be in a role within the Diocese.

The appointment to this role will be made for a three year term initially, with a possible extension at the end of the three years, subject to an evaluation.

**The Diocese of Chester**

Like other dioceses in the Church of England, the Diocese of Chester has been, and continues to be, on a journey of improvement in the area of safeguarding. A strong and capable Chair is needed as the Diocese seeks to progress cultural change.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) meets three/four times a year. The Panel is made up of representatives of external bodies (the police, education, social services, probation), parish representatives, and relevant diocesan and cathedral staff.

The Safeguarding Team in the Diocese comprises the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA), an Assistant DSA, recruitment for a second Assistant DSA is underway, a Policy and Training Officer, an administrator and recruitment has commenced for a part time PA. In addition to its work for the Diocese, the DSA also provides Support to the Cathedral Dean and a limited safeguarding service for Chester Cathedral. A current review is underway to establish the appropriate level of resources required in the department. Similarly, the Chair will be asked to oversee a review of the working relationship between the Diocese and Cathedral.

Each parish within the Diocese has its own Safeguarding Officer who is responsible for implementing safeguarding policy at parish level. It is a strongly held belief that safeguarding is everybody’s responsibility and seek an Independent Chair who can help the Diocese to ensure that culture change takes root and the churches are truly a place where people are safe and can flourish.

**The Role of the Chair of the DSAP**

The key purpose of the DSAP is to provide a source of independent advice and expertise on sound safeguarding policies, procedures and practices, discharging its responsibilities by processes of scrutiny, support and constructive challenge having due regard to the Church of England’s national policy and guidance on safeguarding.

The DSAP is not involved in the individual case management process, but is responsible for evaluating quantitative and qualitative data about casework from quality assurance processes.

In order to demonstrate independence from the Diocese of Chester, it would be preferable for the DSAP Chair not to be a worshipping member of a Church of England church in the Diocese of Chester.

**Context**

The Church of England has national policies and procedures for safeguarding to apply UK legislation and best practice. These national policies are promoted by the House of Bishops through the General Synod, the current key policies are:

**Policy Statements**

* Promoting a Safer Church; House of Bishops policy statement (2017)
* Protecting All God's Children (safeguarding policy for children and young people, 4th edition, 2010)
* Promoting a Safe Church (safeguarding policy for adults, 2006)
* Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults (approved by the House of Bishops in December 2021).

**Practice Guidance**

* Glossary reference document (2017)
* Key roles and responsibilities of church office holders and bodies practice guidance (2017)
* Responding to, assessing and managing concerns or allegations against church officers practice guidance (2017)
* Responding well to domestic abuse practice guidance (2017)
* Learning and Development Practice Guidance (2021)
* Responding well to those who have been sexually abused practice guidance (2022)
* Safeguarding in religious communities practice guidance (2020)
* Safer Recruitment and People Management (2021)
* Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse (April 2022)

The Bishop of Chester is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate people in the diocese take responsibility for the various safeguarding tasks.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel meets three times a year dealing with policy, best practice and governance issues, and in turn reporting annually to Bishop’s Council.

The membership of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) is determined by the House of Bishop’s practice guidance.

**The Membership requirements of DSAP**

**The Chair**

The practice guidance requires that the Chair of DSAP should be an independent (independence signifies not employed in another role in the diocese nor discharging managerial functions in the diocese) lay person with responsibility for ensuring that the panel’s advisory and scrutiny functions are carried out effectively. He/she is to be appointed for a period of 3 years by the diocesan bishop in consultation with the DSA in accordance with the House of Bishops’ guidance in relation to role description and person specification. This can be extended for a further three years following a review of effectiveness. They should have extensive, recent and professional safeguarding expertise and experience, ideally someone who has operated at a senior level in either a statutory sector or relevant voluntary agency.

**Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser**

The DSAP will be advised by the diocesan safeguarding adviser (DSA), who will attend meetings and offer advice.

**Panel members**

The appointment of panel members is the responsibility of the diocesan bishop, in consultation with chair and the DSA. The DSAP should aim for a balanced membership, with representation from the diocese’s senior staff team, other church officers, other Church Bodies and voluntary and statutory partners.

External members should have sufficient recent or current safeguarding expertise and experience. As a minimum, there should be representation from at least three of the following statutory agencies – Social Services, Police, NHS, Education and relevant charity.

Final membership is for local determination.

All appointments to the panel should follow the House of Bishops’ safer recruitment practice guidance. It is recommended that the initial appointments should be for a term of 3 years with an additional term of appointment possible for a further 3 years after the initial term, following a review of commitment and contribution.

All members should have an induction which includes purpose and function of the panel, their role and responsibilities and an introduction to safeguarding in the diocese and the Church of England, as required.

**Current membership**

The current membership of DSAP is:

* + Chair - vacant
  + DSA
  + Lead Bishop for Safeguarding in the Diocese
  + Diocesan Secretary
  + Director of Human Resources and Deputy Diocesan Secretary
  + Archdeacon of Macclesfield
  + Cathedral Dean
  + Parish clergy person
  + LADO representative.
  + Police representative.
  + Probation representative (vacant).
  + Survivor representative (vacant)
  + NHS representative (vacant)

The Safeguarding PA will also be in attendance to take the minutes.

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