

Independent Inquiry Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)
**The Anglican Church: Safeguarding in the Church of England and the
Church in Wales, Investigation Report. October 2020.**

<https://www.iicsa.org.uk/publications/investigation/anglican-church>

This 170-page report is a very fair analysis, with sensible recommendations. Much of the contents is not new because it draws on the findings of previous reports on failings in safeguarding in the Church of England. Many of the failings of the past, the Report acknowledges have been, or are being addressed, though there is still more to do.

Positive Developments

Funding has increased. In 2013 the CofE central spending on safeguarding was £37,000. By 2020 this had increased to a budget of £3,189,000 (page 15). Diocesan spending on safeguarding in 2014 was £895,000. By 2018 it was £5.9 million (page 20).

The National Safeguarding Panel has addressed the difficulties of any oversight body of not being able to get into the detail on every issue, by doing some deep dives:

“Its membership is now more independent and diverse, and its meetings have increased from four to six times annually. Ms Munn replaced a “rubber-stamping approach” with a focus “in-depth on one issue, and through that, bringing that challenge and scrutiny”. The NSP now “takes a specific issue linked to safeguarding and investigates it in detail” in a similar way to a select committee in Parliament.” (Page 16).

The flawed Past Cases Review of 2007-2009 is being rectified by a more thorough review:

“Past Cases Review: Part Two [...] is expected to be completed in 2022. A project management board was established in July 2018. By the end of the PCR-2 process, it is intended that:

“any file that could contain information regarding a concern, allegation or conviction in relation to abuse by a living member of the clergy or church officer (whether still in that position or not) will have been identified, read and analysed by an independent safeguarding professional” (Page 39).

The misapplication of “forgiveness” has been recognised:

“Some religious leaders use ‘forgiveness’ to justify a failure to respond appropriately to allegations. Timothy Storey, for example, was permitted to continue working with children after expressing “remorse for everything he had done wrong”. As observed by Archbishop Welby: “the idea that forgiveness means that you pretend nothing has happened is absolute nonsense ... actions have consequences”.

In September 2017, the Faith and Order Commission published Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Aftermath of Abuse, which recognises that [...] Perpetrators who repent must be willing to face the legal consequences of their sin and should be prevented from accessing environments in which re-offending could occur.” (Page 86).

The CofE has a programme of work for more improvements:

“Further planned improvements include:

- A national online case management system to document all ongoing safeguarding cases and promote a consistent approach across dioceses. A new design and procurement process will take place in mid-2020, with the system expected to be introduced in June 2021.
- An information-sharing protocol to improve consistency of approach.
- Implementing the changes recommended by the SCIE [Social Care Institute for Excellence] final overview report (published in April 2019).
- A survivor-led strategy and a Survivors Charter.
- Considering a form of ombudsman scheme or complaints procedure.
- Implementing safeguarding progress reviews – structured conversations with each diocese following their audit to review progress.
- Revising and updating guidance, including the Safeguarding Training and Development Practice Guidance.
- Implementing continuing professional development for DSAs [Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers], and changes in safeguarding training.
- Producing an e-manual of all national safeguarding policies to be placed on the main Church of England website.
- Developing national standards to create consistent expectations for safeguarding work in each diocese.
- Assisting in the development of a Master’s degree in Promoting Safer Organisations: Safeguarding for Senior Leaders.
- Drafting guidance about dealing with posthumous allegations against church officers.
- Working with the rest of the Anglican Communion to produce guidance on managing child sexual abuse throughout the Anglican world.” (Page 19).

More to be done

The report highlights where changes are still needed:

- There were instances in the past where a bishop or vicar ignored the professional advice of the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser. DSAs should therefore be renamed Diocesan Safeguarding Officers and be given greater powers. (Page vii). And the Clergy Discipline Measure’s 12 month time limit on complaints against clergy who fail to take action on a safeguarding complaint, should be removed. (Pages 59-60, 116).
- There is no national standard for the way dioceses should monitor the parishes safeguarding arrangements. (Page 44).
- There is the need for better information sharing between the church and statutory agencies, by setting up information sharing arrangements. (Pages 43, 47, 146-150). The problem has not just been with the church failing to inform the police or social services, but also police and probation failing to tell the church when there is a safeguarding risk:

“In this case, the DSA [Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser] responded to the arrest of a volunteer server for indecent assault on a child the server met through the church. The DSA became aware of the arrest in June 2017, three months before the trial, when the alleged perpetrator himself disclosed it. There had been no contact from the police. As

soon as the allegations were disclosed, a plan was put in place to limit the alleged perpetrator's contact with children. [...] A risk assessment was carried out promptly (prior to the criminal trial) and measures were put in place to restrict the alleged perpetrator's access to children. The police refused to provide any information about the allegations, so the DSA relied upon information provided by the alleged perpetrator himself.

The DSA arranged for someone to attend every day of the trial and, when the alleged perpetrator was acquitted, another risk assessment was carried out based upon what she had heard during that trial." (Pages 149-150).

- Clergy should not be in the position of supporting both the alleged perpetrator and the alleged victim at the same time. Parish Safeguarding Officers and Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers should play a more active role these circumstances. (Page 46).
- There needs to be more longer-term support for victims and survivors. (Page 55 and 117).
- Those officially investigating complaints should be given Vulnerable Witness training (Page 60, 117).
- In addition to the Clergy Discipline Measure's sanction of 'prohibition for life' there should also be the sanction to depose someone from holy orders. (Page 61, 116).
- Address the 'clericalism' and 'tribalism' which makes safeguarding more difficult:

"A culture of clericalism existed in which the moral authority of clergy was widely perceived as beyond reproach. They benefited from deferential treatment so that their conduct was not questioned, enabling some to abuse children and vulnerable adults. [...] "the abuse of power has been perhaps the most significant reason why abuse has been allowed to foster" [...]

Tribalism: Within the Church, there was disproportionate loyalty to members of one's own 'tribe' (a group within an institution, based upon close personal ties and shared beliefs). [...] Perpetrators were defended by their peers, who also sought to reintegrate them into Church life without consideration of the welfare or protection of children and vulnerable adults. [...]

Naivety: There was and is a view amongst some parishioners and clergy that their religious practices and adherence to a moral code made sexual abuse of children very unlikely or indeed impossible. Reports of abuse were on occasions dismissed without investigation. [...]

Reputation: The primary concern of many senior clergy was to uphold the Church's reputation, which was prioritised over victims and survivors. Senior clergy often declined to report allegations to statutory agencies, preferring to manage those accused internally for as long as possible. This hindered criminal investigations and enabled some abusers to escape justice."

- When a priest moves from the CofE to the Church in Wales, or vice-versa, their personnel file which includes any allegations should always be shared with the new Province. (Pages 94, 98, 117). Personally, I would extend this beyond an agreement between the CofE and Church in Wales, and that whatever Anglican province clergy move to, their personnel file should be shared with the other province.

- The National Safeguarding Team should have power to intervene if a diocese is failing in its safeguarding responsibilities. “The only legal power currently available is that of an Archbishop’s Visitation.” (Page 110).
- There needs to be guidance on when to report sexual relationships between children. A safeguarding expert, Edina Carmi reviewed one example:

“In the case of S4, a youth worker at a church youth group learned that a 13-year-old girl was in a sexual relationship with a 17-year-old boy. The youth worker initially informed the boy that if he “promised not to have sex with the girl” then he would not tell her parents. Mrs Carmi considered that this was “clearly totally inappropriate”. When volunteers became aware that the two were having sex and that the boy may have been coercing the young girl, it was reported to the DSA [Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser] by the head of the youth group. The DSA provided advice over the phone and via email. As a result, the girl’s parents were informed and the matter was referred to the police. The DSA did not, however, advise on whether a safeguarding agreement should be put in place. Mrs Carmi commented that it was difficult for professionals and volunteers to identify when to report concerns about adolescent sexual relationships, and to identify appropriate relationships between children. The DSA also noted that there was no guidance from the Church of England on harmful sexual behaviour between children. There was also no specific guidance as to whether or not it was appropriate for safeguarding agreements to be put in place for alleged perpetrators under 18 years old. (Page 147).”

7 March 2021
Adrian Vincent