

Response to Recommendations of the Independent Reviewer into the case of George Granville Gibson

In this document all of the Report Recommendations are listed, with our response as a Diocese then outlined.

	<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Response</u>
13.1.	I support many of the current practices within the Diocese’s safeguarding team, specifically the role, experience and availability of the current DSA and the support she receives from the Diocese in conducting her duties thoroughly; the formation and regular meetings of the DSMG, comprising multiple agencies and an independent chair, bringing separate oversight and multiple perspectives to safeguarding decision-making within the Diocese; the improved links between the separate safeguarding teams of the Diocese and Durham Cathedral, and the strong links between the DSA and local constabularies and Local Authority safeguarding departments.	<p>We welcome this observation from 2017, and believe that the standards here are maintained to the current day.</p> <p>(Note: the DSMG is now called – in line with national policy – the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel).</p>
13.2	The local development of good quality safeguarding material is also positive, which compliments national guidance, although the <i>Safe and Secure</i> document is significantly overdue for an update.	<p><i>Safe and Secure</i> has been replaced by the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy. This was brand new, and completely rewritten. It incorporates the main themes from the various National Safeguarding Policies and Practice Guidance documents, and it is made clear that it must be read and used in conjunction with the relevant policies. This document is updated annually to reflect current practice, advice and legal changes. It was last approved for use at Diocesan Synod held on 14th November 2020.</p>
13.3.	The increased focus on survivors’ needs is a welcome development, as illustrated by the Rt. Revd Paul Butler’s response to Mr Gibson’s victims, particularly .	<p>We welcome this observation. In line with national policy and practice we continue to strive to provide the best possible care to survivors. (We do acknowledge that delay in publication of this report has not provided the standard of care to survivors we would aim to give; for that we are sorry, but delays were caused mainly because of the requirements of care for other survivors of Granville Gibson, given that a further trial was</p>

		pending. The police and CPS made clear that the report should not be published while further legal action was in process because of the danger of prejudicing a case. Had we published earlier, the Diocese might well have been held in contempt of court.)
13.4	The Diocese enacted a comprehensive response after Mr Gibson's arrest and later conviction, which followed guidance and good practice, responding to multiple, and sometimes opposing, needs of the various members of the Diocese, Mr Gibson's family and the survivors.	The diocese aspires to, and can give evidence of having made, similar comprehensive responses to all safeguarding cases, following guidance and good practice fully.
13.5	It is also positive that the Diocese was open to an external audit of their safeguarding practices by the Social Care Institute for Excellence in 2015, which openness is something they should continue to build upon.	We welcomed the SCIE audit, and are currently fully engaged in the PCR2 (Past Cases Review) process.
13.6	However, there are also a number of areas for further consideration. Amongst these is the relative independence of the DSA secondary to her employment status. Whilst the author has identified no concerns in relation to either Mrs Miller or her manager, Archdeacon Stuart Bain, and the DSA reports separate clinical supervision, the principle of independence should be kept under review, albeit within the context of the wider safeguarding framework and assistance from the DSMG.	As the DSA is contracted for her services rather than employed we consider her to be more independent than an employee. We note that no concerns were raised regarding the standard of her practice. As a registered social worker with Social Work England the DSA has professional standards to uphold and maintain which, if she failed to do so, could result in de-registration.
13.7	All safeguarding notes should not only be written up immediately but made sufficiently clear to accurately reflect what was said by whom and when. Use of direct quotes for the most important aspects assists with this, as well as clearly recording what action was taken and on what basis. There needs to be an emphasis on meticulous record keeping with an expectation that nothing less will do.	Safeguarding training at all levels now includes clear guidance on note-taking and record-keeping. Furthermore, while our Past Cases Review 2 is still in process, initial feedback from our independent reviewer is that record-keeping is now good.
13.8	Safeguarding information should be kept not only in the safeguarding records for the Diocese but also within the relevant blue files with clear accountability for who has responsibility for adding information to personal files as well as a record when something is removed, although the latter	If safeguarding information is held about a member of clergy this is cross-referenced with the Blue Files. As an added measure, there is an electronic database held that is checked before

	should never occur in relation to safeguarding concerns.	references are given to ensure that any safeguarding information known is considered in the writing of the reference.
13.9	Moves to implement a more joined-up, accessible system of writing and storing safeguarding records needs to be expedited, as good record keeping provides a solid foundation for safe practice and timely, well-considered, robust decision making.	See above: all safeguarding concerns should be raised with the DSA, whose records are now cross-referenced with the Blue Files.
13.10	The Church of England should not rely on the outcome of criminal investigations for risk assessment and management but determine their own, local, robust assessment and management systems to allegations raised.	From the moment an allegation is received the management of risk is considered in conjunction with our Statutory Partners. The process as outlined in Responding to Serious Safeguarding Allegations against a Church Officer which was introduced in October 2017 is followed. This ensures the continuous assessment of risk at every stage of the process.
3.11	Consideration should be given to repeating an audit of DBS checks, ensuring these are all completed and any concerns adequately responded to.	There is a robust renewal system in place with an escalation process in place for those who fail to return their paperwork in a timely fashion. Ultimately, this means that permission to engage in public ministry is removed from anyone without a current DBS check.
13.12	When considering recommendation of clergy to other Dioceses or for promotion, a careful consideration of all available information should be a matter of course and any potential concerns thoroughly investigated before approval is reached.	The process noted above concerning Blue Files addresses this issue.
13.13	There should be a clearer focus on victims or those harmed through the actions of the church and its members, considering their immediate needs, rather than the longer-term reputation of the organisation itself. Assessment and management of risk needs to be at the heart of processes and decision making and not the reputation of the institution or any one individual.	Policy and practice continue to develop for the protection of all and the support of victims. Concerns brought to the DSA will always be investigated fully, in line with policy and good practice; this process will never be suspended or obstructed to protect the reputation of the church or any representative of it.

13.4	<p>The church should continue to work on developing a more open culture where concerns, discrepancies and disagreements can be aired and considered without censure or criticism. Safe practice should be at the heart of all ministrations and this requires a corresponding ability to speak openly of even minor discrepancies or concerns, which should be shared appropriately. This relates to the concept of relational security i.e. abuse is less likely to occur in organisations where all members feel their voice will be heard and where concerns can be raised at an early stage and where ineffective or potentially harmful practice will not be ignored. This helps reinforce the idea that safeguarding is everybody's business</p>	<p>This is a national church recommendation, is encapsulated in the recommendations of the IICSA report and Whitsey report, and is very much reflected in the safeguarding Leadership Training Module which is now mandatory for all clergy and many lay ministers.</p>
13.15	<p>Historical offences should be dealt with in the same way that current abusive practices are with this clearly stipulated and written into the Diocese's safeguarding practices.</p>	<p>They are dealt with in the same way. Everyone who undergoes safeguarding training is given this message and it is clearly stated in the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy.</p>
13.16	<p>The church may benefit from incorporating knowledge on sexual abusers, their motivations, how they operate and on-going risk, into existing safeguarding training to ensure all members are aware of how sexual abuse can be perpetrated by colleagues. This should also balance notions of redemption and forgiveness against an on-going need for monitoring and vigilance.</p>	<p>This is a recommendation for the National Learning and Development Team to consider in their ongoing development of training. The concept of grooming is clearly covered in training, as is the understanding that true forgiveness and redemption are not in conflict with the need for truth and justice, and the recognition that actions have consequences. Note the national safeguarding paper on <i>Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Aftermath of Abuse</i> (available at www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/forgivenessandreconciliation_0.pdf). Furthermore, additional optional training in this particular area is being planned now for early 2021.</p>
13.17	<p>The church is very hierarchical, a structure which is likely to remain.</p>	<p>There is now a clear recognition that an inappropriate deference to clergy is potentially</p>

	<p>However, increased awareness of how this impacts on how the church meets its core aims and goals is necessary including its structure inadvertently creating a context in which abuse is more likely and how many of those nearer the bottom of the hierarchy can be disempowered, weakening what should be individual parts of a stronger whole</p>	<p>dangerous; the IICSA report also highlight this area. This is now considered specifically within safeguarding training.</p>
13.18	<p>The church may also need to review its bullying and whistle-blowing procedures. Whilst these fall out with the remit of this review, the Diocese's whistle blowing policy is already over due for renewal and is very brief, consisting of only one side of A4 to cover what can be complex issues.</p>	<p>This policy has been reviewed. However, there is more to be done: the DSA and embers of senior staff are ware of an increase in the number of situations where bullying is called out or alleged. There needs to be a comprehensive consideration good practice around agreements about behaviour and good conduct, the good management of disagreement and bullying. The whistle-blowing policy should again be reviewed within the context of this wider piece of work. The Safeguarding Strategy Implementation Group will be tasked with initiating this work early in 2021.</p>