



social care  
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# **Chester Cathedral independent safeguarding audit (November 2019)**



The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) improves the lives of people who use care services by sharing knowledge about what works.

We are a leading improvement support agency and an independent charity working with adults', families' and children's care and support services across the UK. We also work closely with related services such as health care and housing.

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- identifying and sharing knowledge about what works and what's new
- supporting people who plan, commission, deliver and use services to put that knowledge into practice
- informing, influencing and inspiring the direction of future practice and policy.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 THE AUDIT PROGRAMME

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) is conducting an independent audit of the safeguarding arrangements of the cathedrals of the Church of England. This programme of work will see all the Church of England's cathedrals audited between late 2018 and early 2021. It represents an important opportunity to support improvement in safeguarding.

All cathedrals are unique and differ in significant ways from a diocese. SCIE has drawn on its experience of auditing all 42 Church of England dioceses, and adapted it, using discussions and preliminary meetings with different cathedral chapters, to design an audit methodology fit for cathedrals. We have sought to balance cathedrals' diversity with the need for adequate consistency across the audits, to make the audits comparable, but sufficiently bespoke to support progress in effective and timely safeguarding practice in each separate cathedral.

## 1.2 ABOUT SCIE

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) improves the lives of people who use care services by sharing knowledge about what works. We are a leading improvement support agency and an independent charity working with adults', families' and children's care and support services across the UK. We also work closely with related services such as health care and housing.

Safeguarding is one of our areas of expertise, for both adults and children. We have completed an independent safeguarding audit of diocesan arrangements across the Church of England as well as supporting safeguarding in other faith contexts. We are committed to co-producing our work with people with lived experience of receiving services.

## 1.3 THE AUDIT PROCESS

### 1.3.1 SCIE Learning Together and our approach to audit

SCIE has pioneered a particular approach to conducting case reviews and audits in child and adult safeguarding that is collaborative in nature. It is called **Learning Together** and has proved valuable in the adults' and children's safeguarding fields. It built on work in the engineering and health sectors that has shown that improvement is more likely if remedies target the underlying causes of difficulties, and so use audits and reviews to generate that kind of understanding. So Learning Together involves exploring and sharing understanding of both the causes of problems and the reasons why things go well.

### 1.3.2 Key principles informing the audit

Drawing on SCIE's Learning Together model, the following principles underpin the approach we take to the audits:

- Working collaboratively: the audits done ‘with you, not to you’
- Highlighting areas of good practice as well as problematic issues
- Focusing on understanding the reasons behind inevitable problems in safeguarding
- No surprises: being open and transparent about our focus, methods and findings so nothing comes out of the blue
- Distinguishing between unique local challenges and underlying issues that impact on all or many cathedrals

### **1.3.3 Supporting improvements**

The overarching aim of each audit is to support safeguarding improvements. To this end our goal is to understand the safeguarding progress of each cathedral to date. We set out to move from understanding how things work in each cathedral, to evaluating how well they are working. This includes exploring the reasons behind identified strengths and weaknesses. Our conclusions will pose questions for the cathedral leadership to consider in attempting to tackle the underlying causes of deficiencies.

SCIE methodology does not conclude findings with recommendations. We instead give the Cathedral questions to consider in relation to the findings, as they decide how best to tackle the issue at hand. The Learning Together approach requires those with local knowledge and responsibility for improving practice to have a key role in deciding what exactly to do to address the findings and to be accountable for their decisions. It has the additional benefit of helping to foster ownership locally of the work to be done to improve safeguarding.

### **1.3.4 Structure of the report**

This report is divided into:

- Introduction
- The findings of the audit presented per theme
- Questions for the cathedral to consider are listed, where relevant, at the end of each Findings section
- Conclusions of the auditors’ findings: what is working well and areas for further development
- An appendix sets out the audit process and any limitations to this audit

## 2 CONTEXT

### 2.1 CONTEXT OF THE CATHEDRAL

The leadership in each cathedral, as part of the audit process, is asked to supply a brief description of the institution. Chester Cathedral's is:

*'Chester Cathedral was established as a monastic complex in 1092, becoming a cathedral during the reformation and retains one of the country's most complete set of historic monastic buildings. As such it attracts a large number of tourists each year (up to 1,000,000) as well as hosting a wide variety of services, concerts, educational activities and special events/exhibitions. The Cathedral has its own café, gift shop and falconry centre and tourism accounts for just under half of its gross income each year.'*

The Cathedral sits on the river Dee, in the heart of the city of Chester in Cheshire. Chester is one of the best-preserved walled cities in Britain. It has a number of medieval buildings and apart from a small section, the Grade 1 listed walls are complete. Chester has a population of 79,645 and is the second most populous area of Cheshire. Chester's main industries are now the service industries comprising tourism, retail, public administration and financial services. Many domestic and international tourists visit to view the city's landmarks and heritage. Despite the general wealth of the area, Chester has a number of homeless sleeping rough in the vicinity of the Cathedral.

Chester Cathedral is relatively large, with around 50 whole-time-equivalent staff and 250 volunteers. In addition to the Cathedral buildings, the Cathedral owns a further 64 properties within the historic walls of Chester and the majority of its gross income is generated from rental income and car parking. Despite the income generated, the Cathedral's financial position remains challenging with limited budgets available to cover anything but basic costs and so the Cathedral relies on its large team of volunteers and supporters.

### 2.2 CONTEXTUAL FEATURES RELEVANT TO SAFEGUARDING

Chester Cathedral is unique in having such a complete set of monastic cloisters and a falconry as part of its estate. The cloisters attract huge numbers of visitors to what is a largely open-access public space, and the Cathedral has to do what it can to maintain the safety of those visitors.

The Cathedral has a welcome reception desk which visitors pass through to enter the Cathedral. There is no charge for admission although tower tours attract a small charge. As with many English cathedrals, Chester Cathedral's design provides long cloisters, the Slype (covered passage usually found in monasteries or cathedrals between the transept and the chapter house) side chapels and small spaces obscured by the many pillars. This can cause difficulties in safeguarding terms, in that it makes it more difficult to hold conversations with potentially distressed or vulnerable people in the sight of others.

In the 1980s, the current song school was added to the Cathedral as an extension accessed via a staircase from the cloisters.

Bell ringing takes place in the tower which is a newer build situated apart from the Cathedral itself. The original bells from the Cathedral were recast and hang in the new bell tower.

The Cathedral building is used by the community to host a variety of events such as the University of Chester's graduation ceremonies, formal dinners within the Nave, Chester's Philharmonic Orchestra concerts, pop-up shops and the Christmas Tree Festival.

The size of the Cathedral's budget limits its flexibility in how it responds to any issues, including safeguarding. Despite this, the Cathedral has a dedicated safeguarding officer and funds choir matrons to oversee the choristers.

## **2.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE SAFEGUARDING STRUCTURE (INCLUDING LINKS WITH THE DIOCESE)**

The Dean of Chester, as the lead figure in all aspects of Cathedral life, carries the ultimate responsibility for safeguarding. Supporting him in this are:

- The Cathedral Safeguarding Officer who leads on safeguarding matters within the pastoral care team in the Cathedral, and who has accountability for the provision of safeguarding support as well as overseeing DBS checks
- The Director of Music who reports directly to the Dean, oversees the choir, and therefore has a responsibility for its safety and wellbeing
- The Executive Director who oversees recruitment as well as the Cathedral's business functions
- The Canon Missioner (who is also the Vice Dean) who supports the Dean and acts as the link with the community of Chester
- The Canon Precentor who oversees the bell tower
- The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) who provides a level of safeguarding support to the Cathedral consistent to House of Bishops' requirements.

Currently the Cathedral is developing its Cathedral Safeguarding Advisory Panel (CSAP), which has yet to meet formally. The senior leadership team has recruited an independent chair for this group and hopes to hold the first meeting imminently. Safeguarding is also discussed at Chapter which meets monthly, in the Dean's leadership team, and at the two weekly ministry team meetings.

While the Dean and the Bishop and the Diocesan Secretary are developing links, casework for the Cathedral falls mainly to the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer who refers to the DSA for advice on cases relating to children and adults when required. Thresholds for this support are currently under development in the form of a memorandum of understanding, but this has yet to be agreed. There is no current Cathedral representative on the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel.

## **2.4 WHO WAS SEEN IN THIS AUDIT**

The audit involved reviewing documentation, auditing case files, talking to people at the heart of safeguarding in the Cathedral – such as the Dean, Chapter members, safeguarding staff, music leads, the tower captain, the Falconry Centre and people managing the floor of the Cathedral. Safeguarding was also discussed with a number of focus groups including volunteers and Cathedral staff. The site visit to the Cathedral lasted 2.5 days. Further details are provided in the appendix.

### **2.4.1 Any limitations to audit**

Choristers were invited to speak with the auditors as part of the site visit. Unfortunately, only one chorister and one chorister parent were available. Auditors did however, meet the choristers prior to Evensong and to observe rehearsal, the role of the chorister matrons and performance arrangements in action.

## 3 FINDINGS – PRACTICE

### 3.1 SAFE ACTIVITIES AND WORKING PRACTICES

#### 3.1.1 Precincts and buildings

Managing the wellbeing of large numbers of worshippers and visitors across the Cathedral is a complex task. The auditors judged that the staff and volunteers at Chester Cathedral do this well.

##### *Description*

Chester Cathedral is located in the centre of Chester, and therefore easily accessible to workers, shoppers, students and others as they make use of the city.

The management of the site is principally the work of the vergers team, comprising the Head Verger; three other part-time vergers and nine volunteer vergers. As well as vergers, the Cathedral also has a Cathedral head constable who is employed in his role part time as the constable and part time as Liturgical Lead and is supported by five volunteer constables who were all previously police special constables. None of the vergers live on site, but are expected to be present within 10 minutes of being called out to support those who do live on site such as the residentiary canons and the Director of Music. The Head Constable would also be expected to be called out should an alarm be activated during the night.

The Head Verger is directly line managed by the Dean. The Head Verger in turn line manages the verger team. All employed vergers have completed C1 safeguarding training as have some of the volunteer vergers. All members of the verger team have completed C0 training.

The vergers open the Cathedral at 8am each weekday in time for morning prayers at 8.15am. They are also responsible for closing it each evening which, after an event, can be very late at night. Vergers often work alone and the Cathedral has a lone working policy to cover this, although the Head Verger says that they are not always able to apply this.

The Cathedral holds 'week-ahead' meetings which involve the vergers, the Events Manager, Admissions and Clergy. There are also 'month-ahead' meetings held where any upcoming large events are discussed. The Head Verger meets regularly, but not formally, with the Canon Missioner who provides updates from her contacts within the community.

Strategic oversight of security at the Cathedral falls to the Cathedral Constable, whilst ensuring day-to-day security is the role of the verger team. The wider team of constables' remit is limited largely to supporting at special events. Paid vergers do carry radios. There is a City Link radio based on the admissions desk for use when required, which links with a network of police, shops and other city centre buildings so information about risks, or about missing people, can be shared quickly. The Cathedral Head Constable also has access to the Chester Police Airwave radio system.

The Cathedral has CCTV installed but the vergers team does not have access to view this and it is overseen by, and available to be remotely viewed by, the Cathedral Constable. Cameras are placed around the main building and outside at some of the access points such as gates. There is no CCTV in the organ loft or the bell tower.

Vergers have procedures in place to deal with suspicious packages, found drugs paraphernalia (gloves and sharps bins) and a lock-down procedure to ensure those within the Cathedral are safe should there be an incident of terrorism.

Vergers have also been offered a course in Makaton as the Cathedral moves towards being inclusive to all.

### *Analysis*

The management of the premises generally works well, and the vergers are a visible presence within the Cathedral. There is perhaps a tension between the roles of the vergers and the Cathedral Head Constable however. Vergers are responsible for opening and closing the building and therefore for the checks required. They are called out should an alarm be activated yet do not have access to CCTV before entering the premises. Without CCTV the vergers cannot check where a missing child or vulnerable adult might be within the Cathedral building or surrounding area.

There is a Cathedral security policy, written by the Cathedral Constable, which has gone to Chapter to be ratified (see section 4 for further analysis). However, the status of this very comprehensive policy is not clear and vergers and CSO were not part of the consultation, neither have they adopted it, instead having their own guides and protocols. It is not clear whether Chapter has seen or discussed the policy or whether it is currently being used in induction for new staff, as believed by the Cathedral Constable.

Auditors saw a good deal of evidence that vergers and other departments on the Cathedral floor, including those within the shop and on the welcome desk, work as a team when it comes to safeguarding. They are part of regular meetings and take a particular interest in vulnerable adults who come into the Cathedral, noticing any concerns and also being aware when an individual has not been seen for some time. The care and dedication shown by staff is evident and make safe working practice feel embedded. Referrals are made appropriately to the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer who is well known by staff around the Cathedral.

Vergers approach those who might be tempted to take photographs of choristers, requesting them to stop, as does the Cathedral Constable. The chorister spoken to by auditors, advised that vergers were quick to prevent photographs and that choristers he knew felt safe.

There is a widely understood emergency evacuation procedure, and although this is well communicated, it is not practised regularly, neither is the lockdown procedure. Staff on the Cathedral floor wear lanyards to readily identify who has what role on the floor, and this is well understood. Door codes are changed by the Cathedral Constable every six months.

The vergers feel supported, but did raise the concern that sometimes, when a request

is made by a member of the public to speak to someone ordained, it is difficult to find someone quickly. Volunteers also raised this as a potential weakness in practice and although auditors were reassured that there is always a duty member of clergy within the Cathedral, this might be an area requiring improved communication.

**Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- How might the Cathedral better empower vergers to undertake their role and how can the roles of vergers and the Cathedral constables link together more cohesively?
- Is the system of lone working and call out late at night sufficiently understood and safe for vergers?
- Can the Cathedral facilitate better communication between vergers, volunteers and the Clergy on duty within the Cathedral?

### 3.1.2 Vulnerable adults

#### *Description*

The Cathedral welcomes a small number of homeless people into the building and allows them to warm up or sit quietly. Whilst there is a welcome desk, past which visitors have to walk, there is no charge for entering the Cathedral and all visitors are welcome.

The Canon Missioner was previously the Acting Dean and at this time, introduced CO training for all volunteers which has raised the profile of vulnerable adults within the Cathedral. The Canon Missioner has also forged links with people within the City of Chester, providing an outward looking focus to the Dean's senior leadership team. The Canon Missioner continues to maintain close links with a wide variety of city and regional organisations including the Street Pastors, Chester Mystery Plays, Chester Visual Arts, Chester University Theological Society, the Link Up prayer meetings, Chester Voluntary Action, the City of Sanctuary Board, and is a member of the Truth and Poverty Commission for 2019. She works closely with the vergers who are updated on any development relative to their role.

The Cathedral runs a 'Place of Welcome' on a Monday which is open to all, no matter their background, and which is supported by volunteers. The Cathedral has recently appointed a further Canon on a part-time basis who will also be the vocations advisor for the Diocese and for the Cathedral and who will oversee the work of volunteers, bringing new ideas.

A number of staff and volunteers are in roles which bring them into contact with vulnerable visitors. As well as vergers and the Cathedral constables, there is a team of day chaplains, who are available on the Cathedral floor, on a rota basis, for anyone who wants support with prayer and guidance.

The Cathedral employs a visitor operations manager and a small team of welcomers as well and volunteers. Some staff, including the Welcome Manager, have received Mental health first aid training and plan to share what they have learned with others on the team.

All the chaplains have a DBS check and safeguarding training at C4-3 level. All paid staff and volunteers are trained to C0 level and where required, paid staff and volunteers are trained to C1 level.

In addition to the work in the Cathedral, the Lay Member for Chapter is a member of the pastoral team who undertake home visits to those unable to attend services due to frailty or illness, in line with the Pastoral Care Team Handbook. Appendix 5 of the Handbook includes a list of resources available to vulnerable adults within Chester City and this list is kept within the Vergers' office and at the Welcomers' Desk for reference.

The Cathedral has a large refectory which is linked directly to the Cathedral cloisters. Staff are trained to level C0 and see a number of homeless or otherwise vulnerable adults. Staff understand that the issue of homelessness is complex and there is no easy solution. On occasion, usually when it is very cold, the Cathedral will lay on a day for homeless people, providing coffee in the morning, lunches and coffee in the afternoon, linked with resources for them to access, advice from external services and a listening ear for those who need it.

The Cathedral Safeguarding Officer has made links with the local authority's Senior Manager for Safeguarding Adults in line with advice from the Church's National Safeguarding Team in order to check on best practice.

### *Analysis*

In the Cathedral's own self-assessment, the embedding of a safeguarding culture was felt to be under-developed. However, auditors were impressed with the connections between various teams coming into contact with vulnerable adults and with their obvious care. Records regarding concerns about individuals were well kept and brought to the attention of those taking over the next shift. Despite the always difficult balance between welcome to all and protection from those who may pose a risk, there was a definite sense that vulnerable adults are firstly seen as deserving of time and care rather than posing a risk themselves.

Cathedral staff advised auditors that they see far more vulnerable adults than children requiring protection. Every morning there is a whole staff meeting and information regarding those who may be vulnerable or about events and initiatives which might need additional thought are discussed. Staff felt that the Dean is visible and ready to assist wherever possible.

The Cathedral's refectory staff showed a good understanding of vulnerable adults. They work closely with welcoming staff and while they do not provide money, they will make a judgement on whether to provide a hot drink or something to eat. Auditors saw evidence of this. Refectory staff felt the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer is visible and vigorously encouraged them to undertake training which they feel is very relevant to their roles.

Auditors felt that the Cathedral is promoting a sense of welcome, and staff and volunteers have benefitted from training in safeguarding and have a desire to undertake additional training e.g. conflict resolution. The auditors heard of examples of good practice and it was clear that the role of the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer, despite being relatively new, is embedding well.

All staff on the Cathedral floor have access to radios when required. There is also an alert system with a code word for a more immediate reaction should it be needed. Staff have practiced this and feel that it works well.

The Pastoral Care Team are asked to pre-arrange any home visits, ensure someone is aware of their location and record the date, time and purpose of the visit in line with the Pastoral Care Team Handbook which provides useful guidance on all types of visits and provision of transport.

There is understanding among Cathedral staff that people within their own groups may become vulnerable by virtue of increasing age. The volunteers on the Cathedral floor are well known to staff who ensure it is noted if they become unable to undertake a role, or if a volunteer fails to attend over a period of time. However, there is nothing formally in place for volunteers who become vulnerable, are no longer able to undertake their role and yet whose social life revolves around the Cathedral. The newly appointed Canon Vocations Advisor may help with this.

**Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- Can the Cathedral ensure a safe response to a vulnerable adult who might go missing?
- How can the Cathedral better support people with vulnerabilities within the Cathedral's own paid and voluntary workforce?

### 3.1.3 Children

This section is about children who come to the Cathedral in various capacities. It does not cover choristers who are referred to in the next section.

#### *Description*

Chester Cathedral receives a high number of visits from schools every year, with over 16,000 visiting in 2018. The Cathedral has an Education Department and the Strategic Plan 2017–2019 aims to make Chester a child-friendly Cathedral. Until recently, the Education Officer was also the Cathedral's Safeguarding Coordinator. However, this was seen to be too large a role and the Cathedral has now split this.

The current Education Officer is a teacher by background. She is new in post within the last year, was recruited under Safer Recruitment guidelines and is line managed by the Canon Missioner to avoid a conflict of interest as the wife of the Dean. The Education Department hosts children in the Nave of the Cathedral, the Education Room (for younger children) and the Cloister Room (for older children). Mostly groups are too big to be supported in one room and so workshops are located within the different areas. Teachers retain responsibility for children at all times and all visits are risk assessed prior to the date of the visit. Objectives are agreed with teachers, and children are greeted at the entrance to the Cathedral. All education staff and volunteers wear lanyards and are clearly identifiable. They are trained to level C0 or C1 and undertake a DBS check.

Photographs can be a concern at school visits, usually being taken by those visiting the Cathedral at the same time. Volunteers are on hand to ask visitors not to photograph children and during particularly busy times e.g. Pilgrims Week, an announcement is made about photographs.

The Cathedral has a lost/found child policy which is well known throughout the Education Department. There are guidelines on evacuation and lockdown for the Cathedral and whilst the Education Department has not practised these, they have talked them through.

The Cathedral also has a falconry within the grounds. This is overseen by the Visitor Reception Manager. Staff within the falconry receive visitors throughout the year, usually children attend either with their families or on an organised school visit. The Falconry Manager is C1 trained in safeguarding and DBS checked, as are his staff. Any concerns are reported to the CSO who visits regularly and is able to contact the school Designated Safeguarding Lead if required.

The Cathedral has a Saturday Singing Club which is overseen by a deputy lay Clerk. The club practises in the song school and often welcomes choristers whose voices have broken but who still wish to sing. Safeguarding policies are applied in line with Cathedral practice.

Currently there are no children who ring bells at the Cathedral but there are visiting ringers, some of whom may be under 18. The Tower Captain is aware of the safeguarding policy. Visiting ringers are asked to sign in and are monitored.

The Cathedral has a well-established Sunday School, led by seven volunteers. There are 35 children who attend regularly, some of whom have medical and social needs. Parents bring children to the Cloister Room or to the Education Room where they are met by volunteers. Parents are welcome to stay if they would like to. The children undertake activities such as Godly Play, hear stories and have prayer and quiet time until a sideman arrives to tell them it's time to rejoin the service. Children are always accompanied to the toilets and also back to the Cathedral Nave where they sit with Sunday School leaders until the end of the service. Each child's parents are introduced to the team and a contact form is completed. For visiting children who wish to attend Sunday School, parents are asked to remain in the Cathedral building.

The Sunday School has taken several opportunities to engage children in supporting vulnerable adults and the homeless, including making 'blessing bags' (containing toothbrushes and other necessities) and building links with the local 'Share Shop' which takes donations for the homeless and those on low incomes.

### *Analysis*

Auditors felt that the Education Department welcomes school visits safely and have thought carefully about children's safety and wellbeing. There are procedures in place for all staff and volunteers and where there have been any concerns, these have been swiftly and effectively actioned and reported to the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer.

The Cathedral has a lost/found child procedure which was written in consultation

with the Education Department for when a child becomes separated from their school party or family.

Sunday school systems work well and volunteers are clear on ensuring that families provide contact information, what to do if a child makes a disclosure and what needs to be reported to the CSO. All staff wear lanyards, are easily identifiable and have undertaken training on safeguarding.

The older Sunday School children meet in the Cloister Room. This is within the cloisters and slightly apart from the main Cathedral Nave. There are lockable doors which contain glass panels. Recently staff were concerned about an individual standing in the cloister and then looking in through the Cloister Room windows. Staff have mobile phones, but these do not work well in the room which has thick walls and there is no landline within the room. Staff do not have access to a Cathedral radio. Despite support from the Cathedral Constable during this time, staff have been left feeling somewhat isolated should a more serious incident, or need for first aid, occur.

#### **Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- How might the Cathedral establish better communication and support for Sunday School staff in the event of it being required?

## **3.2 CHOIRS AND MUSIC**

### **3.2.1 Choir**

#### *Description*

Chester's choristers are led by the Cathedral's Director of Music who has been in post for 12 years and prior to that, was the Assistant Director of Music. The Director of Music reports directly to the Dean rather than the Canon Precentor. The Cathedral has a purpose-built song school attached to the cloisters, which includes large practice rooms, hanging space for robes and a communal area large enough for refreshments for choristers on arrival at rehearsal. Choristers use toilets within the song school which are specifically for them and not shared with anyone else.

Chester Cathedral is not linked with a specific choir school and so both girl and boy choristers are selected from a wide range of schools in the local area. Choristers range in age from 7–18 for the girls and until voices change for the boys.

The choristers are cared for by two chorister matrons employed by the Cathedral. Both are part time and cover the weekly rehearsals between them. Choristers are dropped at rehearsals by parents, or if older, make their own way to the Cathedral. They are the responsibility of the Cathedral only once they reach the song school and this is laid down in the Guidelines for Choristers and their Parents issued by the Dean and Chapter. There are always two members of staff on duty and on arrival, choristers are greeted by the Chorister Matron on duty and registered as present, provided with refreshments and enter rehearsal followed by evensong. After Evensong, choristers are either collected by parents, or taken to the car park by matrons or the Director of Music who wait with them until parents arrive.

Boy choristers rehearse on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings and alternate Saturday and Sundays. Girl choristers rehearse on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday evenings and alternate Saturday and Sundays. This timetable means that choristers have a clear weekend every other weekend which helps to balance being a chorister with other interests.

Choristers undertake regular tours and have been to Cumbria and Ireland. Risk assessments are undertaken, and detailed timetables put together for each tour. There are four codes of conduct in place for all members of the choir and it is made clear to all that they are representing Chester Cathedral. Choristers are provided with staff contact numbers should they need them, and parents receive a detailed itinerary.

There is a clear structure of progression for choristers. They start as probationers, and progress through to being deputy head chorister or head chorister. Those choristers with more responsibility might ask a chorister if they are ok but rely on chorister matrons to help younger children. There is no anti-bullying policy for choristers. All choristers (apart from probationers) receive a small bursary paid over the year.

Chester Cathedral has six lay clerks who have no responsibility for choristers, but who do sing alongside them and share the song school for rehearsals. They use different toilets away from the choristers and have their refreshments separately. Lay clerks reported to the auditors that they make it clear they are not responsible for children. Apart from the annual prize giving in the Bishop's garden there is limited contact with choristers. Despite having no responsibility, lay clerks are DBS checked, provide a confidential declaration on appointment and undertake C1 training. However, there is no written code of conduct or guidelines regarding social media or online contact with choristers for lay clerks.

Visiting choirs to Chester Cathedral receive a letter from the Acting Assistant Director of Music which outlines the arrangements for safeguarding and asks for confirmation that the choir has its own safeguarding policy and that all adults with responsibility for children have been DBS checked. Until this is received, Chester Cathedral does not confirm visits for choirs.

The Cathedral also has a Saturday Singing Club which is overseen by a previous lay clerk. The club welcomes adults and children and has a safeguarding policy statement, recruits safely and any adult with responsibility has a DBS check and is trained.

Currently the Cathedral has no choral or organ scholars due to lack of budget, but prior to this, any scholars tended to be ex-choristers who live at home. Some of the choristers are learning the organ and so like to page turn for the organist during services. The organist is located in the organ loft, accessed by stairs and which does not have CCTV, however the organist is DBS checked and the organ loft is visible from the ground.

### *Analysis*

All cathedral choirs raise a number of potential safeguarding issues. Young children

need to be protected from any harm from the general public. Children working towards a highly prized goal in a competitive environment creates the potential for any choristers to be groomed by people in positions of trust within the choir context. Additionally, the demands of elite performance can be in tension with child welfare requirements and expectations.

Auditors were only able to speak to one chorister (see section 2.4.1 Any limitations to audit), despite all choristers being invited, along with their parents. From what auditors did hear and observe, choristers generally appear to enjoy choir, have fun and like the daily routine. They don't find the demands of being a chorister too difficult because having a boys' and girls' choir means they are able to cover the week and weekend services between them, leaving alternate weekends free. Auditors judged the welfare of choristers as being highly prioritised and did not appear to be compromised by the demands of their role.

There was no mention of any bullying, online bullying or concerns between friendship groups and the Director of Music felt that this is helped by the fact that choristers come from different schools and so have not been with their chorister friends all day. The Chorister reported feeling safe at all times and displayed a good knowledge of who to contact should there be a concern. However, there are no arrangements in place should bullying become an issue and little mention of cyber bullying or cyber safety in policy and procedures.

Some choristers attend school very locally, whereas others travel a fair distance. This means that choristers arrive at song school at different times, making it easier for chorister matrons to provide drinks and sandwiches and to notice any concerns. Both chorister matrons have been in post for over 10 years and auditors were impressed with their safeguarding arrangements and the obvious care they took of all choristers.

The chorister parents reported feeling well supported and happy with arrangements for choristers, including drop off and picks up from the song school. Car shares between parents are arranged by them rather than the Cathedral. Matrons were reported to be the first people parents would contact with a concern about their child, followed by the Director of Music.

The chorister and parent spoken to by auditors felt that the Director of Music was fair, and balances the desire for excellent musical results with the fact that choristers are children as well. The Director of Music has put in place a buddy system for new chorister parents who might not know others or who are not of the same religion. This is helpful. There is also a choir support group which is a social group for choristers and their parents arranged by an ex chorister parent.

The movement of the choristers around the Cathedral is well managed. Auditors observed drop-off at song school and movement between the song school and the Cathedral for Evensong. The on-duty Choir Matron sits in the Quire during Evensong and is available should a chorister be taken ill. The Director of Music is also available as are the vergers. Evensong is sometimes audio-livestreamed for anyone to listen to. Auditors heard an example of a chorister who, 10 minutes before a service to be recorded live, felt they did not want to take part due to nerves. Pressure was not put on him to perform and he was allowed to sit with the Choir Matron.

Auditors heard examples of the Director of Music seeking advice on the welfare of choristers from Thirtyone:Eight (out-of-hours advice for many Church of England settings) and reporting what he had put in place to the CSO on her return. When he thought the issue may arise again, he contacted parents in line with the advice he had received. Auditors felt the Director of Music was highly considerate of the welfare of choristers.

No one linked with choristers mentioned photographing of choristers being a particular issue. When it does happen, members of the public are asked not to take photographs by the vergers or any member of staff on duty.

The auditors concluded that the Music Department is well managed and has good links with the CSO and other departments within the Cathedral. The Director of Music sits on the Leadership Team and the Diary Meeting Team, plans to sit on the Cathedral Safeguarding Advisory Group and is currently Vice Chair of the Choir Support Group.

It is unusual for the Director of Music to be managed by the Dean rather than the Canon Precentor and auditors heard the reasons for this. The current arrangement is working well, but auditors had some concerns about whether it is sustainable for the Dean to directly manage the music team and the vergers. This is explored further under section 5.

**Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- How might the Cathedral ensure that choristers benefit from anti-bullying arrangements which include online and social media (cyber)?
- While there are no current issues, how can the Cathedral ensure that those coming into contact with choristers have access to clearly reinforced guidance on expectations of conduct around children, including online?
- Are there areas of the Cathedral and/or ad hoc activities accessed or undertaken by choristers that would benefit from a risk assessment (for example, access to the organ loft)?

### **3.2.2 Bell ringing**

The bell tower in Chester Cathedral was built much later than the original cathedral and is a separate building close to the city wall. It has 12 bells, some of which are the original Cathedral bells having been re-cast. The Cathedral ringing team practise on a Monday and ring every Sunday morning.

The Tower Captain has two Assistant Tower Captains, all are DBS checked. There are currently no children on the ringing team, but the Captain is aware that any visiting team may include children. There are good links between the tower and the CSO who meet at least quarterly but have more regular contact if required, for example if there is something new that the tower needs to be aware of. The Tower Captain is line managed by the Canon Precentor who regularly calls in to check all is well.

The tower itself is accessed by two sets of doors which lock. There is a camera

outside so that people can see what is happening, but there is no link from the tower to the Cathedral or from inside the tower to the exterior door. The tower opens into a small courtyard containing benches and slightly away from the Cathedral. It was quite dark, and auditors felt that not being able to see who was within the courtyard before opening the door to leave, could be a concern.

All ringers have received safeguarding induction and training. The tower captain, who has been in his role for five years, has undertaken C1 training. There are a minimum of two people with DBS checks present in the tower during practices.

No checks are made of visiting parties of bell ringers regarding whether any of them are subject to any safeguarding agreements, or have similar restrictions which could be a weakness, however, auditors also heard that visiting teams were always monitored and signed in.

**Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- Can the Cathedral be satisfied that bell ringers leaving the tower are as safe as they could be?
- What measures can be put in place to better monitor visiting bell ringers?

### **3.3 CASEWORK (INCLUDING INFORMATION SHARING)**

When safeguarding concerns are raised, a timely response is needed to make sense of the situation, assess any risk and decide if any action needs to be taken, including whether statutory services need to be informed. In a cathedral context, this includes helping to distinguish whether there are safeguarding elements to the situations of people receiving pastoral support.

#### **3.3.1 Effectiveness of responses**

The auditors looked at seven case files and found many of the cases were also discussed by those they spoke to during the site visit. Many of these cases/incidents involved vulnerable adults who had been referred to the CSO by those working on the Cathedral floor.

Where incidents are reported, the reaction from the CSO is timely and effective and auditors were struck by the sensitivity of working. The CSO consults the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser when required despite there currently not being a memorandum of understanding or service level agreement in place between the Cathedral and the Diocese.

Where an allegation or concern was raised about a member of staff or a volunteer, there was some evident disparity in understanding of what constitutes a conduct versus safeguarding issue and this affected the timeliness for reporting these to the DSA in the first instance, before Cathedral action. The auditors consider that this places an additional urgency on agreeing a memorandum of understanding to clarify the process and responsibility for such reporting.

The auditors saw one case example of a concern being raised by email to the Cathedral central inbox. There was a delay, due to annual leave, between this email

being received and being shared with the CSO in a timely way, though it was considered to be non-urgent and a holding reply was sent. It was correctly identified as a potential safeguarding concern and directed to the CSO in the first instance.

### **3.3.2 Effectiveness of risk assessments, safeguarding agreements and the risk management plan**

The auditors did not see any examples of safeguarding agreements.

### **3.3.3 Quality of recording**

Case files were generally well presented and in chronological order. Some enclosures were copies of diary entries from those on the Cathedral floor. This was useful because they clearly showed the date, but often not signed and sometimes written in a diary space for a different date (simply because it was empty), which could cause confusion.

Each file contains a front sheet which contains the thresholds for the government's Allegations Management process as a reminder when considering whether the concern may amount to an allegation to be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The front sheet also contains clear prompts to consider the welfare of all individuals involved and future action required. Auditors were impressed that this front sheet was completed and saw evidence of the wider consideration of safeguarding concerns. However, some files ended abruptly with no recording of the final outcome and not every file contained a risk assessment where one might have been expected.

### **3.3.4 Information sharing practice**

Auditors saw a wide range of safeguarding concerns being noticed, recorded and shared across the Cathedral generally. Any concerns regarding vulnerable adults or children are passed to the CSO either verbally, by email or by phone. However, there is no formal way of passing concerns which is used by all. This has resulted in some concerns being delayed, for example by post, or not reaching the CSO in a timely way. Auditors heard that a formal mechanism has so far been resisted for fear of the important informal channels currently in place ceasing and people being deterred from speaking out by formal 'referral form'. Auditors felt that the current system works but could be easily disrupted by a delay and wondered whether the informal system could be made more uniform to minimise this.

In and around the Cathedral are day chaplains, the verger team and floor staff and volunteers, all of whom may be contacted with potential safeguarding information. All were clear that the CSO should be contacted and that in her absence, they could contact the Dean or the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor. Auditors saw evidence that this understanding is embedded and well understood.

#### **Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- Could a more formal recording system, rolled out across the Cathedral, help with passing concerns to the CSO in a timely way?
- How can the Cathedral ensure that those monitoring the central email inbox are supported to share concerns in a timely way?
- Should any risk assessment (or rationale for not completing a risk assessment) be placed on case files?
- How can the Cathedral ensure that mechanisms are in place to ensure that outcomes are shared and recorded on casefiles?

### **3.4 CLERGY DISCIPLINARY MEASURE**

The auditors did not see any Clergy Disciplinary Measure files as part of the audit.

### **3.5 TRAINING**

Safeguarding training is an important mechanism for establishing safeguarding awareness and confidence throughout the Cathedral. It requires good quality substance, based on up-to-date evidence, with relevant case studies, engaging and relevant to the audience. It also requires strategic planning to identify priority groups for training, details the training needs/requirements of people in different roles, and an implementation plan for training over time that tracks what training has been provided, who attended, and who still needs to attend or requires refresher sessions.

#### *Description*

Ensuring that all staff and volunteers are trained at a level commensurate with their post within the Cathedral context is a challenge. Chester uses the House of Bishops' national training programme. All clergy have received level C4 training, in line with House of Bishops' requirements.

All staff and volunteers are required to do online C0 training with the expectation that they will go on to undertake C1 training which is being rolled out currently. Safeguarding training is part of the Cathedral's recruitment checklist and is undertaken either prior to taking up a post or in the very early days.

The Cathedral has a Volunteer Manager, who is a volunteer herself, and who works for one day per week. The Volunteer Manager has been in post since 2010 and her role is to liaise with the CSO to ensure Safe Recruitment and that safeguarding training is in place for all volunteers. All volunteers undertake C0 training as a minimum and the CSO makes a decision about whether a higher level of training is required based on the role of the volunteer. All new volunteers are required to undertake training before they take up their role and are not permitted to begin until the training is completed.

Safeguarding training is tracked and recorded electronically and each personnel file contains a checklist which includes the requirement for training. Where there are any concerns regarding the practice of a volunteer, they are required to undertake further training before being able to resume their role.

## *Analysis*

All members of Cathedral staff and volunteers have undertaken safeguarding training to at least C0 level. The CSO has worked very hard to put this in place, liaising with all areas of the Cathedral to ensure it is completed. Auditors heard evidence of this from staff who have been in post for some time, as well as new staff and volunteers, none of whom appeared to have felt any resistance to undertaking the training.

A clear expectation and a timescale by which existing staff and volunteers had to complete training was put in place and the Dean has now ensured that any existing volunteers who have not done so, cannot undertake their role and have taken a step back until their training is complete. The Volunteer Manager post has assisted in ensuring that this is the case.

Some volunteers felt that the training being online was not helpful. Many are not computer literate and found it difficult to undertake alone. To assist, the Volunteer Manager re-wrote the online training instructions and asked several volunteers to trial these for her. Volunteers also advised auditors that they felt the materials in the National Church's safeguarding training included videos which might be upsetting for some people to watch alone and felt that perhaps a group session using the training would be useful. The CSO has provided face-to-face training for those who require it – sometimes on an individual basis. The volunteers also felt that regular reinforcing of the training would help them to remember the subject matter and help to embed it. This did depend on the roles of volunteers however. Those within roles with direct contact with children, for example the Education Department, felt that they were regularly reminded of the requirement for safeguarding.

The auditors noted a very clear message, directly from the Dean, that without doing basic safeguarding training, no-one can volunteer. This has been reinforced by the CSO, Volunteer Team Managers and the Volunteer Manager. Volunteers who had not shown safe working practice (such as taking a child somewhere alone without thinking) are asked to step back from volunteering until they have completed additional safeguarding training and their return has been agreed by the CSO. Auditors heard directly that volunteers understood this. Where they didn't agree however, they might take the decision to remove themselves from volunteering.

Auditors were impressed that the difficult task of ensuring training for all staff and volunteers has been successfully managed at Chester and has become part of the culture of staff and volunteers alike.

### **Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- Can the Cathedral make the offer of face-to-face training more widely known?
- How might the Cathedral continue to embed the messages from training by reinforcing them between formal training sessions?

## 3.6 SAFER RECRUITMENT

### *Description*

The Safe Recruitment of staff and volunteers falls within the remit of the Executive Director supported by the Volunteer Manager. All staff and volunteers complete an application form, have references and an interview/discussion. A confidential declaration is completed by those paid staff interacting with children and vulnerable adults, and all those in eligible roles, are DBS checked.

Chester Cathedral has so far been able to DBS check those they feel require such a check and have not yet felt the impact of the changes from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) on who is eligible for a DBS check.

DBS checks are recorded, and any blemished checks are passed to the DSA for a safeguarding risk assessment to be carried out to identify all risk factors. Any decision to appoint is then made by the Cathedral.

All files contain a Safer Recruitment checklist which is completed as the recruitment process progresses.

### *Analysis*

Safer Recruitment files and processes seen by the auditors were generally judged as being good. However, application forms, the confidential declaration and interview sheets are not kept on file, having been destroyed once the recruitment process is complete. This was following previous advice sought by the Cathedral. Auditors did have sight of files where this had not yet happened and so were able to see the process followed. However, later destruction of process means that the audit trail on Safe Recruitment is difficult to follow and should the process need to be verified for a particular member of staff at a later date (possibly by the LADO or police), this would prove impossible.

For volunteers, the process is beginning to embed. The Volunteer Manager, who was appointed by the previous Dean, has at the direction of the CSO, ensured that each volunteer now goes through a process which includes references and an interview before being appointed and going on to undertake training prior to beginning their role. Auditors are aware that this is often a difficult process to implement for such a large number of volunteers and it is to Chester's credit that this is in place and working.

The Cathedral has not yet faced the challenge from DBS regarding a tightening up of those roles which are eligible for a DBS check e.g. deputy lay clerks and vergers.

Cathedral staff have not completed the House of Bishops' Safer Recruitment training (S1), so while the process is in place and working, the understanding behind it is not as strong as it might be.

**Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- How can the Cathedral ensure that relevant paperwork required to audit the Safer Recruitment process is retained on individual files?
- Could the Cathedral consider putting key staff through the House of Bishops' Safer Recruitment training?

## 4 FINDINGS – ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORTS

### 4.1 POLICY, PROCEDURES AND GUIDANCE

#### *Description*

Chester Cathedral provided a safeguarding policy dated 2016. It was not clear that this had been superseded by the 2019 summary of the Church of England's Promoting a Safer Church 2019 which is visible on the Cathedral's website.

The Cathedral also has a number of other departmental handbooks containing procedures that some managers describe as policies, some of which contain guidance on safeguarding e.g. the security policy (unapproved by Chapter). There is also a comprehensive Risk Register which is overseen by Chapter and a Safer Recruitment policy (2015).

There are various other Cathedral publications such as the Choristers' Handbook, and there is a safeguarding section in the Employee Handbook. Each department also writes a safeguarding statement, but it is as yet unclear how these will be drawn together.

#### *Analysis*

Auditors felt that the safeguarding policy and procedure documents at Chester Cathedral could be improved. They appear to have grown up in an ad hoc way which is not yet reflected in a good quality overarching handbook to compliment the safeguarding policy in line with the House of Bishops' Guidance.

There was some confusion regarding the status of the security policy which contains a significant amount of safeguarding information. This has been lifted from the Cathedral Constables' Association. Some staff were under the impression that this was now the safeguarding policy and was being used in staff induction having been ratified by Chapter. Others were unaware of this policy. Vergers have their own handbook and understanding of safeguarding policy which is not known by other departments across the Cathedral floor. The Director of Music has ensured that safeguarding is also contained within the Chorister Handbook which is sent to all choristers and their parents.

From this, auditors were left with the impression that should someone wish to look at the safeguarding policy for Chester, there might be a variety of procedures they could go to, rather than one overarching policy which is referenced in the others. This could be confusing and therefore lead to inaction. It is likely that the lack of working agreement between the Cathedral and the Diocese and the fact that the CSAP is not yet in place have meant that the safeguarding policy has grown up in an ad hoc way. This might be something that CSAP looks at as a priority.

The effectiveness of policies and procedures relies on them being well disseminated and embedded and being kept under regular review, with a timetable to structure the work. Maintaining and updating policies will always be a time-consuming and challenging aspect of the CSO's role.

### **Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- How can the Cathedral ensure that there is one overarching and comprehensive safeguarding policy which is disseminated to all and embedded in practice?
- How can the Cathedral best update its policies and procedures, to ensure they stay relevant and useful, making use of the newly forming Cathedral Safeguarding Advisory Panel?

## **4.2 DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING ADVISER/ AND CATHEDRAL SAFEGUARDING OFFICER**

### *Description*

The Cathedral Safeguarding Officer (CSO) role in Chester was, until earlier this year, part of the Education Officer's role. Chester recognised this as being a larger remit and so funded a part time (three days per week), distinct CSO role which is a lay position, with a remit, based on the interim role description:

- Undertake safeguarding casework, under the supervision of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, and ensure that all work is recorded in line with the House of Bishops' safeguarding policy and guidance
- Respond to safeguarding concerns or allegations in line with advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, the House of Bishops' safeguarding policy and guidance and good practice
- Work cooperatively with the Diocese, police, local authorities and other bodies in cases in which it is suspected that a child, young person or vulnerable adult has suffered abuse or is at risk of suffering abuse
- Give advice to the Chapter, staff and volunteers of the Cathedral on safeguarding matters. To report to the Chapter and Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor on the progress of Cathedral safeguarding arrangements
- Give advice, information and support to victim/survivors of abuse and ensure the Cathedral responds well to those who have suffered abuse, under the guidance and with the support of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor
- To undertake and commission risk assessments as appropriate
- To provide or coordinate the provision of training on safeguarding matters
- To develop a suite of policies and procedures and ensure their implementation, in line with the Diocese and the guidance issued by the House of Bishops. This will include policies in relation to Safer Recruitment and safeguarding of the Cathedral choir
- Ensure that the Chapter considers safeguarding matters regularly and as appropriate and that policies are reviewed annually
- Contribute to the work of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team as capacity allows

- Ensure that records are kept that are accessible, accurate, securely held and provide monitoring data for Chapter and the Diocese
- Work collaboratively with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and the National Safeguarding Team and attend national events and activities

The current CSO has fulfilled the role since January 2019 when it became a distinct post, however, she was previously the Education Officer and so carried out aspects of the safeguarding role under this remit. The CSO is a qualified teacher and has been involved in the life of the Cathedral for a number of years.

The CSO role is a dedicated, paid post for 22.5 hours per week which is a considerable commitment to safeguarding by the Cathedral following a recognition that the role was more than an addition to the Education Officer's post.

The CSO reports directly to the Dean and shares offices with the Executive Director who oversees Safer Recruitment. All saw themselves as working together as a team on safeguarding.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) is a qualified social worker. She works full time for the Diocese and is supported by a Diocesan Safeguarding Training and Policy Officer with holiday cover provided by Thirtyone:Eight.

Auditors noted some tension between the safeguarding work of the Diocese and that of the Cathedral. There is currently no memorandum of understanding (MOU) in place and no service level agreement (SLA) despite the interim job description for the CSO being based on this assumption.

### *Analysis*

Auditors found that the lack of a MOU or SLA between the Cathedral and the Diocese was a weakness for safeguarding. Whilst there was an obvious respect for the CSO, the fact that she is not social work qualified appeared as a factor for the DSA who would prefer to see everything, despite not having the capacity to do this. The CSO appears to pass concerns she feels are relevant to the DSA and acts as a filter for cases that can be managed by the Cathedral because they do not hit the safeguarding level and are rather a practice issue. However, the current DSA raised concerns that on occasion the Cathedral has not passed all issues to her for oversight where these have met the threshold for referring to the DSA under practice guidance. Auditors were left with the feeling that there is a stalemate between the Cathedral and the Diocese over who is liable for decision-making and therefore who would be responsible should a wrong decision be made. Whilst at grass roots level, the CSO and DSA do work together, this is somewhat thwarted by concerns regarding a lack of thresholds for issues being passed to the DSA for advice.

The CSO, as a teacher, does have a level of experience in safeguarding, is respected and valued by Chapter and the wider community, and is widely known as the person who can be approached with safeguarding concerns. She is sensitive in her approach yet robust enough to challenge the Cathedral when required. Auditors felt that having a dedicated, paid CSO role should assist in clear working arrangements with the Diocese, yet this has not so far been the case.

The Dean and the CSO have been the driving force in much of the recent improvement in the Cathedral's safeguarding systems, with the very recent establishment of CSAP (although yet to meet), training levels and embedding of safeguarding practice

A clear, shared understanding of different functions is a key element of any well-constructed system, and across the staff and volunteers within the Cathedral, auditors did find a good shared understanding that the CSO is the safeguarding referral point for concerns. This was seen as good practice and minimises the risk of miscommunication.

Both the Dean and the DSA were hopeful of a resolution to the current MOU arrangements. The Dean has completed a further amendment to the MOU which he hopes will be accepted and agreed by the Diocese, providing a step forward for agreed joint working. Arrangements for the Dean (or a representative) to be a member of the Diocese Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) is also imminent and this too will assist in forging better safeguarding links and a better understanding between the Cathedral and the Diocese. Auditors felt that this does need to be a two-way channel of communication in order for both for the Cathedral to have clarity on casework (DSAP does not deal with any case work), and for the Diocese to better understand the working of the Cathedral and therefore any inherent safeguarding risks.

**Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- How can the Cathedral work with the Diocese to ensure that the Memorandum of Understanding between the two for safeguarding work is put in place and working well?
- How can the newly formed CSAP ensure good links with the Diocese and begin to put in place a flow of information which is beneficial to both?
- Can the Cathedral consider how else channels of communication and joint working with the Diocese might be fostered?

### **4.3 RECORDING AND IT SYSTEMS**

The CSO has a database for case management and files which include a comprehensive front sheet and record any referrals to the DSA or wider agencies. There are separate files kept by the DSA. However, in some cases not all of the information pertaining to a case is included on the Cathedral's file. In one case seen by the auditors, the Cathedral held two separate files for the same member of staff. The DSA advised that she is required to maintain a separate safeguarding file in relation to any required risk assessments. Information gathered to assist in any risk assessment would be confidential to that process. The final risk assessment would be provided to the Cathedral. This is in line with GDPR and safeguarding procedures.

To track training and DBS checks, the CSO maintains a record which she shares with the Cathedral Volunteer Manager for volunteers. The Cathedral Volunteer Manager has a system in place for volunteers and the Executive Officer has a system in place for paid staff.

**Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- Are there any potential advantages to the Cathedral using the same systems as the Diocese?

## 5 FINDINGS – LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

### 5.1 QUALITY ASSURANCE

A safe organisation needs constant feedback loops about what is going well and where there are difficulties in relation to safeguarding, and this should drive ongoing cycles of learning and improvement. Robust quality assurance enables an organisation to understand its strengths and weaknesses. Potential sources of data are numerous, including independent scrutiny. Quality assurance needs to be strategic and systematic to support accountability, and shed light on how well things are working and where there are gaps or concerns.

Chester Cathedral has a comprehensive risk register which is useful in supporting quality assurance by RAG rating risk in a wide range of areas. This is regularly scrutinised by Chapter.

Chapter receives a safeguarding report from the CSO at each meeting and there is challenge and support provided. Chapter has a lay member for safeguarding who is a member of the pastoral care team and can assist in the oversight of safeguarding within the team.

Because the Cathedral does not yet have a working, independently chaired Cathedral Safeguarding Advisory Panel (CSAP), a working MOU with the Diocese or a representative on DSAP, there is not yet the measure of scrutiny of the safeguarding work in the Cathedral that there could be. Once this is in place, real consideration of quality assurance loops and how the three systems (Chapter, DSAP and CSAP) will link together, should be put in place.

Despite the current lack of structures to support safeguarding quality assurance, auditors did see genuine efforts to learn from any recent problems which have arisen across the Cathedral. The Dean has made clear directives regarding safeguarding training, staff supplied by contractors and not allowing staff to begin work until their DBS checks have returned. This has been reported to Chapter who monitor data and the improvement of performance figures reported to them in these areas. This suggests to the auditors a mindset and a willingness to improve in which a more comprehensive quality assurance system could be beneficial.

#### **Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- How can the Cathedral utilise the new developments in safeguarding (CSAP, the MOU and a representative from the Cathedral on the DSAP) to ensure the early implementation of quality assurance loops?
- How can a more comprehensive quality assurance framework, incorporating qualitative as well as quantitative measures, be developed?

### 5.2 COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE SAFEGUARDING SERVICE

A good complaints policy enables people to raise concerns, and to have timely and appropriate consideration of any problems. A strong policy is clear about who

complaints should be made to, and how they can be escalated if necessary. Positive features include an independent element, and clarity that raising a safeguarding concern, and making a complaint about a safeguarding service, are two distinct things.

Chester has a safeguarding complaints procedure which is up to date and publicised on the Cathedral's website. The procedure provides contact details for the CSO and the Dean for concerns about Cathedral staff and the DSA, should there be a complaint about the CSO or the Dean.

**Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- There were no considerations raised under this heading.

### 5.3 WHISTLEBLOWING

The Cathedral has a whistleblowing policy which is visible on the Cathedral's website and which includes links to the NSPCC's Whistle Blowing Helpline.

It is not evident that the policy extends to volunteers, mentioning only 'employees'.

**Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- Should the Cathedral consider extending the rights to protection to their considerable number of volunteers should they become whistleblowers?

### 5.4 SAFEGUARDING ADVISORY PANEL

Based on the national guidance in *Roles and Responsibilities* for Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panels (DSAPs), the panel should have a key role in bringing independence and safeguarding expertise to an oversight, scrutiny and challenge role, including contributing to a strategic plan. No specifics are provided in relation to cathedrals, with the apparent assumption being that cathedrals are part of diocesan structures.

*Description*

No-one from Chester Cathedral currently sits on the Chester DSAP. The Cathedral's Senior Leadership Team is aware that this is not good practice and has regularly requested that this be rectified. Auditors were advised that there is no intentional delay in the Dean becoming a member of DSAP, but membership is by Bishop's Appointment and this has yet to be made.

Currently, the Cathedral does not have a working Cathedral Safeguarding Advisory Panel (CSAP). There are plans underway for this to be put in place and currently, an independent chair has been appointed and Safer Recruitment checks are being completed as quickly as possible. The first meeting will be held imminently and will meet quarterly. Membership has yet to be fully agreed but will include the DSA as a further link with the Diocese.

## *Analysis*

The Cathedral is not currently represented on the DSAP. Auditors felt that this is a missed opportunity to promote cohesive working, and for the Diocese and Cathedral to learn from each other, to share systems and therefore improve safeguarding. It also breaches the House of Bishops' policy.

Because there is no Cathedral Safeguarding Advisory Panel, currently Chapter has taken on the role of both operationally and strategically managing safeguarding within the Cathedral. Once the CSAP is in place, it will take on the responsibility for operational scrutiny, meaning that Chapter will require a change in role to become more strategic in its function.

### **Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- How might the Cathedral and Diocese implement a Cathedral representative on the DSAP and how might they ensure that Cathedral engagement with DSAP is as useful as possible to both?
- How can the Cathedral ensure that Chapter moves to take on a more strategic role once CSAG is in place?
- Could the Cathedral consider how best the DSAP, CSAP and Chapter will fit together at an early stage in the development of the new CSAP in order for it to be as effective as possible?

## **5.5 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Safeguarding leadership takes various forms – strategic, operational and theological – with different people taking different roles. How these roles are understood, and how they fit together, can be determinative in how well-led the safeguarding function is.

### **5.5.1 Theological leadership**

#### *Description*

As the leader of every aspect of the Cathedral's life, the Dean of Chester has overall theological responsibility for promoting safeguarding. The current Dean is fairly new to Chester, having been in post only a year. Prior to that, there was an acting Dean at Chester. The Dean has set out his role as one of setting the safeguarding culture within the lens of the six key objectives of the Cathedral's Strategic Plan:

- Worship and prayer
- Learning and discipleship
- Welcome and hospitality
- Serving our city, region and Diocese
- Sustainable and ethical business operation
- Conserving and developing our buildings and heritage

The theology of safeguarding cuts across all six objectives and involves the Cathedral ensuring that safeguarding is embedded in all that it does, including recognising it in teaching, worship and prayer. The Dean advised auditors that while he hasn't specifically preached about safeguarding, the Cathedral was as involved as possible with Safeguarding Sunday (there was a national issue about the lateness of promotion of this day) and the Canon Missioner did preach about safeguarding at Evensong. The Dean does look to promote the message of safeguarding wherever possible and during the site visit, the Cathedral was hosting the 'Knife Angel', a large angel made entirely of knives as a national monument against violence and aggression.

### *Analysis*

The auditors recognised that the Canon Missioner and to a lesser extent, the Canon Precentor, are visible presences in the Cathedral. This will be further bolstered by the arrival of a further canon with responsibility for vocations.

The Dean's commitment to better safeguarding was evident to the auditors. He acknowledged, however, that currently the theology of safeguarding within the Cathedral is not yet at the place where he would wish it to be. Given the prominence of his role, some form of public messaging about the importance of safeguarding may be helpful in reinforcing the safeguarding message.

#### **Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- What public messages, made through links with theology, can the Dean provide to raise the profile of safeguarding in the Cathedral?

## **5.5.2 Strategic leadership**

### *Description*

The House of Bishops' *Roles and Responsibilities* practice guidance assigns different and overlapping roles to Dean and Chapter, with the former having a clear leadership role in relation to safeguarding, and Chapter having a strategic and oversight role in relation to the Church of England's Promoting a Safer Church safeguarding policy. This includes the requirement to have a Promoting a Safer Church action plan in place that sets out, in line with national and local priorities, how the policy is being put into action and is reviewed regularly.

The Chapter of Chester Cathedral consists of seven members, four of whom are clergy and three are executive members. The CSO provides a report to Chapter on safeguarding at every meeting. Chester Cathedral has a two-year strategic plan, the current one running from 2018 to 2020, which shapes the work of Chapter.

The Dean takes his role in safeguarding very seriously and has noted where safeguarding is weaker across the Cathedral, seeking ways to strengthen it wherever possible. The Dean is currently managing a larger number of staff than usual due to difficult line management relationships and his desire to ensure cohesive teams and clear oversight, including oversight of safeguarding. Whilst his

reasons are sound and his actions commendable, auditors felt that this arrangement was not sustainable in the long term without having a detrimental effect on the Dean's own wellbeing.

As with other cathedrals, there is a blurring of function between strategic and operational leadership, with the clergy members of Chapter providing key executive as well as oversight functions. This places a particular onus on non-executive Chapter members to hold the executive function to account. This is always a difficult role, perhaps particularly in safeguarding when the lay members do not have particular safeguarding experience. It was difficult for auditors to obtain a sense of challenge regarding safeguarding from within Chapter.

The CSO is therefore the main focus for holding Chapter to account on safeguarding. The CSO in Chester is well placed and capable of doing this. However, the lack of CSAP currently further complicates matters because Chapter is also holding an operational role in the oversight of safeguarding. A working CSAP with an independent chair would provide a degree of scrutiny of safeguarding leadership in the Cathedral.

**Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- How can internal challenge in Chapter be strengthened?
- How might the Cathedral consider, when setting up CSAG, its role in also providing a degree of challenge to safeguarding strategic leadership?
- Can the Dean realistically sustain the oversight of such a large number of staff with a safeguarding element within their role? Should the Cathedral be considering alternative arrangements?

### **5.5.3 Operational leadership and management**

#### *Description*

Aside from the senior clergy, the pivotal figure in operational leadership of safeguarding within the Cathedral is the CSO. To the auditors, it was clear that the CSO is well known in and about the Cathedral, stopping to speak to staff, ask about training and seeking news on the wellbeing of volunteers within the Cathedral. The CSO is accountable for all aspects of operational safeguarding in all areas of the Cathedral and therefore has a lead safeguarding role. The CSO works collaboratively with the Dean and the Executive Director as well as operational casework with the DSA.

The Executive Director sits on the Dean's Leadership Team, which functions as the executive arm of Chapter, as do the Canon Missioner and the Canon Precentor. Safeguarding therefore appears well represented, but it is not clear what safeguarding decisions the Leadership Team takes.

There are daily meetings for Cathedral staff at which the CSO can provide updates and raise concerns about safeguarding practice for dissemination to wider staff. For volunteers, there are regular team meetings organised by volunteer team leaders at which safeguarding is discussed. This varied from team to team with the highest

number of discussions being held within the Education team. Auditors felt that this was probably appropriate due to the remit and close working with children of this team. Auditors did not see minutes for the team meetings, but did see evidence of regular communication between the CSO and team leaders. Minutes for volunteers to peruse might assist with embedding safeguarding messages.

The Cathedral also has a College of Canons which meets annually and supports the Cathedral by advising on their priorities for the year ahead, playing a part in its governance. All canons are part of the College which hears a remit wider than safeguarding. The CSO reported to the College of Canons on 3 July 2019

### *Analysis*

The daily staff meetings, visibility of the CSO on the Cathedral floor and the Senior Leadership meetings appear effective mechanisms to get messages across and therefore ensuring safer operational working within the Cathedral. It is not clear how these various meetings join up for safeguarding though. The CSAP might be useful in ensuring a link between volunteers, paid staff and senior leaders. Lack of minuting for volunteers means that messages may be quickly lost.

The Cathedral Leadership Team is another forum in which operational safeguarding decisions may well be made, but it is not part of the Cathedral's governance structure and should take care not to detract from the accountability of Chapter. The College of Canons could provide useful input to safeguarding from both a lay and clergy point of view although it will not be part of the governance structures under the new Cathedrals Measure.

Operationally the most serious barrier to practice in safeguarding is the lack of an agreed working remit for casework between the Cathedral and the Diocese. Whilst on the ground, informal meetings and discussions between the CSO and the DSA are happening and a working relationship is developing, at an operational leadership level, links are less well developed and the Cathedral would very much like to see this resolved.

#### **Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- How can the Cathedral Leadership Team, the CSAP and Chapter develop their roles to ensure there is clear structure and transparency of safeguarding decision-making?
- Can better use be made of the College of Canons in safeguarding overview and challenge?
- Does the Cathedral Leadership Team blur the accountability of safeguarding decision-making in any way which causes concern?

### **5.5.4 Culture**

The most critical aspect of safeguarding relates to the culture within any organisation. In a Church of England context, that can mean, for example, the extent to which priority is placed on safeguarding individuals as opposed to the reputation of the Church, or the ability of all members of the Church to think the unthinkable about

friends and colleagues. SCIE's experience auditing safeguarding in faith contexts more broadly, suggests that in areas where there is experience amongst senior clergy of previous serious abuse cases, a culture of openness and humility in approaching safeguarding issues can be stronger. This can be accompanied by a move away from responses which give too much attention to reputational issues and the welfare of (alleged) perpetrators, as opposed to the welfare of victims and survivors.

Any cathedral should strive for an open, learning culture where safeguarding is a shared responsibility, albeit supported by experts, and which encourages people to highlight any concerns about how things are working in order that they can be addressed. An open learning culture starts from the assumption that maintaining adequate vigilance is difficult and proactively seeks feedback on how safeguarding is operating and encourages people to highlight any concerns about how things are working so they can be addressed.

In their self-assessment prior to audit, Chester Cathedral felt that a safeguarding culture is not as embedded as it would wish. However, the auditors noted, from almost all participants, a definite shift in safeguarding awareness within the Cathedral recently. Many stated that this had been over the last few years, from the date of the first independent audit commissioned by the acting Dean (now the Canon Missioner) and increasing with the arrival of the current Dean and the appointment of the CSO.

Auditors felt that that the work of the CSO is central to this. Volunteers spoke of being more aware of safeguarding because of their training (despite it being online). In the main, they felt more part of the Cathedral in this respect. A congregation member advised that changes in culture would include: accompanied children, trained staff and volunteers, a visible adult presence at all times for choristers, proper handover of Sunday School children to their parents following a service, and a real shift in support for adults who might appear vulnerable. All groups and individuals spoke of safeguarding being more frequently discussed.

There was, despite this, a tangible lack of complacency regarding safeguarding. All who spoke to the auditors felt that more could still be done to embed safeguarding and ensure that concerns were seen to be acted upon and the culture was safe. There are still pockets of volunteers who are less well informed regarding safeguarding but the requirement for CO training has meant that there is a baseline level of knowledge for all. Auditors felt that the development of a fully robust safeguarding culture will always be a work in progress, but that there is a willingness to improve safeguarding culture and measures developing or already in place to allow this to happen. Much of what might support Chester Cathedral make progress has been discussed in previous sections, but the clearer setting out of a cohesive safeguarding plan, possibly led by the CSAP and endorsed by Chapter, with a particular focus on the theology of safeguarding from the Dean and lead Canons, could bring a focus to the very visible efforts already being made to improve safeguarding.

**Questions for Chester Cathedral to consider:**

- Now that there is a baseline level of knowledge for all staff and volunteers and an emerging safeguarding culture in place, how can the Cathedral make continued progress on developing a safe culture, ensuring that this grows up in a cohesive way?

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

This section provides the headline findings from the audit, drawing out positives and the areas for improvement. The detail behind these appraisals are in the Findings.

- There are already some examples of strong safeguarding practice across the Cathedral, and staff and volunteers at all levels are committed to improving safeguarding.
- The strong leadership of the Dean has allowed the safeguarding culture to grow, following clear decisions on training and practice.
- Safeguarding feels high on the agenda and the CSO has had a significant impact in the development of safeguarding practice through awareness-raising and training.
- The Music Department is well organised and choristers feel safe and there are good, well thought-out practices within the Education Department and the Sunday School, all of which have the most contact with children.
- All volunteers are safely recruited and trained to at least level C0 in safeguarding which has been a difficult target to organise but which has meant volunteers feel involved and can help take forward a safeguarding culture.
- Those working on the Cathedral floor have shown a high level of support for vulnerable adults and have evidenced strong safeguarding practice.
- The oversight and management of safeguarding is embedded in Chapter, but the lack of a CSAG as an effective mechanism for promoting improved practice means that this embedding could be made stronger.
- Quality assurance for safeguarding across the Cathedral is not well established.
- The requirement for a CSAP is evident as the missing link for safeguarding operational oversight.
- There is now an urgent need to agree and take forward the working arrangements between the Diocese and the Cathedral.
- An urgent focus on completing the task of gathering together departmental procedures into a single coherent working safeguarding handbook which is known, and used by all staff and volunteers is now vital to stop the tendency for departments to develop their own procedures and arrangements without reference to the CSO or Chapter.
- There appears a confusion between the roles of the vergers and the Cathedral Constables which is perhaps not evident on a day-to-day basis, but could be serious should there be a serious incident.

## APPENDIX: REVIEW PROCESS

### DATA COLLECTION

#### Information provided to auditors

In advance of the audit, staff at Chester Cathedral sent through:

- Recruitment policy March 2015
- Safeguarding summary policy 2016
- Cathedral Safeguarding Officer JD 2018
- Safeguarding Risk Register 2019
- Chapter minutes June 2019, July 2019, September 2019
- Cathedral organogram (current)
- Draft Cathedral safeguarding
- Cathedral safeguarding policy at a glance (undated)
- Cathedral Servers Team document 2019
- Choristers guideline brochure August 19
- Chorister information – Director of Music
- Safeguarding complaints policy undated
- Draft Chester Cathedral security policy & procedures (handbook) undated
- Draft MoU undated
- Lost/found child policy undated
- Cathedral newsletter July 2019
- Cathedral newsletter October 2019
- Pastoral support protocols
- Pilgrim Days risk assessment October 19
- Safeguarding Audit Points – Canon Precentor
- Safeguarding reports to Chapter April 2019, July 2019, June 2019, May 2019, September 2019
- Safeguarding action plan for Chester Cathedral 2018/19
- Safeguarding dealing with a disclosure undated
- Safeguarding in the Falconry statement undated
- Welcome Team Safeguarding statement undated
- Saturday Singing Club Safeguarding implementation (draft)
- Security policy & procedures 4 March 2019
- Self-audit action plan 2016
- Standard confirmation letter for visits
- Sunday school implementation of Cathedral safeguarding policy undated
- Whistleblowing policy undated

## Participation of members of the Cathedral and Diocese

The auditors had conversations with:

- The Dean of Chester
- The Cathedral Safeguarding Officer
- The Executive Director
- The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor
- The Director of Music
- The Canon Missioner/Vice Dean
- The Head Verger
- The Tower Captain
- The Visitor Reception Manager
- The Education Officer
- The Nursery Manager
- The Operations and Facilities Manager/Cathedral Constable
- The Volunteer Coordinator

Focus groups were held with:

- Chorister
- Chorister Parent
- The Lay Clerks
- The Matrons
- Cathedral Volunteers
- Cathedral Staff

*What records / files were examined?*

Auditors saw a selection of case files and Safer Recruitment files and were given access to the Cathedral's training database.