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Diocese of Argyll and the Isles Independent Safeguarding Audit (June 2022)





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- informing, influencing and inspiring the direction of future practice and policy.

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by the Social Care Institute for Excellence

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE AUDIT

- 1.1.1 The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) has been commissioned to undertake an audit of the safeguarding arrangements of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Argyll and the Isles. Audits for the Dioceses of Galloway, Motherwell, Aberdeen and Dunkeld, and the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh, and Glasgow have already been completed.
- 1.1.2 The aim of the audit is to work with the Diocese to support safeguarding improvements by identifying how well safeguarding is working, identifying where there might be weaknesses and exploring the rationale for both strengths and weaknesses found.
- 1.1.3 The audit has used SCIE's established methodology Learning Together which has been used through a three-year programme of Church of England Diocesan Audits. While some of the areas to be explored differ slightly, the methodology remains the same. The audit was completed by Jane Bee and Jane Scott in April 2022 with quality assurance provided by SCIE through Sheila Fish, Senior Research Analyst.
- 1.1.4 The audit is designed to be proportionate. Auditors aimed to cover enough breadth and depth to gain an insight into safeguarding within the Diocese, recognising that within the timescales available that this was not wholly comprehensive.
- 1.1.5 The audit process involved interviews, written contributions, a survey and documentary analysis (details of the process are provided in the Appendix). This included:
- eight conversations with key clergy and lay staff involved in safeguarding within the Diocese
 - 26 surveys were completed by parish safeguarding coordinators and priests with 65% from rural areas and 35% from rural towns and feedback from one partner.
 - documentary analysis of six case files, policies and procedures for safeguarding and minutes of meetings was also undertaken.
- 1.1.6 As part of the audit process, the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles sought to involve the views of those not involved in delivering the safeguarding service including survivors of abuse and who had received a service from the Diocese. Auditors heard from three individuals whose views are included as *contributors* within the report.
- 1.1.7 There were no other known limitations to this audit.

1.2 THE DIOCESE

- 1.2.1 The Diocese of Argyll and the Isles was founded in 1878 and covers 31,080km with a total population of 76,800 of whom 14,399 are Catholics. The diocese covers the Council areas of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles), most of Argyll and Bute, much of Highland and part of North Ayrshire (Isle of Arran).
- 1.2.2 The diocese has three deaneries, 25 parishes with 43 regular places of worship served by 17 priests of whom 14 are incardinated, two are Religious and one from the

Diocese of Aberdeen. There are also three permanent deacons and one seminarian, who is a deacon, and two hermits neither of whom have a pastoral role. Parishes are geographically large and most communities in each parish are small and remote with no population larger than 10,000 people.

- 1.2.3 The Diocese is led by Bishop Brian McGee and is a registered charity. The Trustees are the Bishop, Vicar General and Chancellor and the diocese employs a part-time finance manager and safeguarding secretary. All other curial appointments are clergy or volunteers.

1.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE SAFEGUARDING STRUCTURE

- 1.3.1 The Bishop is responsible for safeguarding in the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles and delegates day to day responsibility to the Vicar General. The Bishop is supported by the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA), who has immediate and direct access to the Bishop, Vicar General and Safeguarding Secretary. The DSA and Safeguarding Secretary are line managed by the Vicar General.
- 1.3.2 In line with *In God's Image* (2021), the Diocese has a Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Group (DSAG) of nine members which is chaired by the Bishop and meets quarterly each year although extraordinary meetings can be organised if necessary. The Diocese also has a Diocesan Risk Assessment and Management Team (DRAMT) of seven members which advises the Bishop on safeguarding allegations and concerns. In 2018, the Diocese formalised the daily delivery of safeguarding through its safeguarding core group into the Safeguarding Leadership Team (SLT) comprising the Bishop, Vicar General, DSA and Safeguarding Secretary. The SLT focuses on safeguarding and reports to DSAG.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

- 1.4.1 This report consists of:
- introduction
 - the findings that the audit presented – by theme
 - questions for the Diocese to consider, listed where relevant at the end of each finding.
 - conclusions of the auditors' findings: what is working well and areas where future development might be considered.
- 1.4.2 An appendix sets out the audit process and any limitations to this audit. Each substantive section begins with a generic introduction. This is followed by a description of what the auditors learnt about arrangements and practice in the Diocese followed by their analysis of the strengths and systemic vulnerabilities identified. The description is value neutral. In the analysis the auditors make assessments of the safeguarding arrangements and practice they learnt about. SCIE methodology does not conclude findings with recommendations. Instead for each theme, the report provides the Diocese with questions to consider in relation to the findings.
- 1.4.3 This approach is part of the SCIE Learning Together methodology and requires those with local knowledge and responsibility for progressing improvement work to have a key role in deciding what to do in order to address the findings and to be responsible for their decisions. This methodology also helps to encourage local ownership of the

work required in order to improve safeguarding.

2 Findings

2.1 SAFEGUARDING LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- 2.1.1 Safeguarding leadership and management within the diocese falls ultimately to the Bishop of Argyll and the Isles who is responsible for leadership on all aspects of life within the diocese. Leadership takes various forms with different people or groups taking different roles. The aspects of leadership considered by the audit were spiritual or theological, strategic and operational leadership, and looking specifically at how this was defined and understood; how these roles are understood and fit together can determine the effectiveness of leadership with regard to safeguarding.

SPIRITUAL/THEOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP FOR SAFEGUARDING

Introduction

- 2.1.2 The McLellan Commission (2015) wrote of the need for ‘a clear account of the theological principles which underpin safeguarding’ (p 215, paragraph 3.24). The Commission emphasised the importance and the urgency of the task in setting out a compelling and coherent theology of safeguarding for the Catholic Church in Scotland. In response to McLellan, Archbishop Tartaglia set out the foundations for future developments on the theology of safeguarding within *In God’s Image* (Bishops’ Conference of Scotland 2018), which was strengthened further in version two (Bishops’ Conference of Scotland 2021):

When Jesus was asked which was the first of the Commandments, he responded: ‘This is the first: Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is the one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You must love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these’ (Mark 12: 28–30). Seen from this perspective, the safeguarding of children and of all vulnerable adults is a work of love that emerges from the fundamental programme of Christian faith and living, mandated by Jesus himself. This is true, too, of the Church’s commitment to respond in justice and compassion to the care of victims and survivors of abuse.

(Bishops’ Conference of Scotland 2018, p.7)

- 2.1.3 It is for the Archbishop or Bishop, Vicar General, Vicars Episcopal, Chancellor and Deans to help parish priests, congregations and others around the Diocese to understand that safeguarding is intrinsic to the Catholic faith and a priority. This aspect of the leadership role is the foundation for the culture of the Church and is critical in terms of making it a safer place for children and vulnerable adults.

Description

- 2.1.4 The Bishop was able to articulate a clear vision and understanding of a theology of safeguarding integral to the culture of the Church. The Bishop expressed that all are made in God’s image and individuals deserve to be treated with dignity. A theology of safeguarding should be rooted in justice and also in the experience of survivors. The Bishop acknowledged that safeguarding is likely to be viewed by some as a process with rules and regulations, but at its simplest, safeguarding is about keeping people

protected which is central to being Christian.

- 2.1.5 The Bishop thought that a broader understanding within the Church has developed from it being almost impossible to believe accounts of abuse by the clergy to a position of acceptance and a greater understanding for the need to repair the hurt and damage caused. The Bishop reflected that his own understanding had grown significantly and been informed through meeting survivors and hearing their accounts of how living with trauma impacts every day. In the Bishop's view, justice, compassion, prayer and dignity are central to moving forward.
- 2.1.6 The auditors heard and saw evidence that the theological aspect of safeguarding is regularly reinforced by the Bishop. Similar to other dioceses, the liturgical calendar outlines that the Church in Scotland holds a Day of Prayer for those suffering from abuse on the first Friday after Ash Wednesday and this had been communicated through all parishes. The Bishop sends out an annual statement to be read out to all parishes and since 2016 there has been regular communication about safeguarding through ad clerum and parish newsletters.
- 2.1.7 The auditors also heard of events held by the diocese to emphasise the spiritual and theological roots of safeguarding. The Bishop's key message was that protecting the vulnerable is a core gospel value and that safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is a core principle of christian life. Events included safeguarding gatherings planned for each of the three deaneries in early 2020, the diocesan's first Diocesan Safeguarding Day in November 2021 and the regular clergy assemblies.
- 2.1.8 The safeguarding gatherings were held in two of three deaneries with the last cancelled due to the Covid pandemic. These events were designed to bring clergy and volunteers at parish and diocesan level together. While the events themselves were successful, attendance was more limited because of the distances to travel for some. The Diocesan Safeguarding Day for Parish Priests and Parish Safeguarding Coordinators in 2021 was held virtually and recorded very high attendance levels. In his introduction to this event, the Bishop reflected on the Gospel call to look after the vulnerable and reminded participants that safeguarding was not primarily about paperwork but living out the Gospel. The plan for the future is that more of these events will be held virtually to reach a greater number of people across the region.
- 2.1.9 From the survey responses and *participants'* comments, there were reflections that this theological understanding may not be as overt or as widely understood by all involved in the work of parishes including clergy, parish safeguarding coordinators and across all trainers. Some reflected that the two-year synod on synodality - formally opened by Pope Francis in 2021 - may allow for more conversation by greater numbers within the Church as Pope Francis has expanded this process from principally the world's bishops to include consultation with all involved in the Church including parishioners and those less involved in active church life to make church governance more open and inclusive.

Analysis

- 2.1.10 The Bishop's understanding of the theological aspect to safeguarding is very strong as is his commitment to prioritising safeguarding and becoming involved in the work of the diocese. The Bishop and the Safeguarding Leadership Team (SLT) are clear in their articulation of the need for safeguarding to be core to the Catholic mission and committed to developing a culture of safe care.
- 2.1.11 This articulation and commitment from the Bishop is a crucial part of setting the context and tone for the work of the diocesan safeguarding team within the diocese

and local parishes. It is clear from the documentary analysis that this diocese can demonstrate a longstanding and continuing commitment to safeguarding and a theological understanding has developed across several years.

- 2.1.12 The extent to which the importance and centrality of safeguarding is shared across parishes is difficult to measure. As some feedback highlighted, the theological understanding of and a commitment to safeguarding may not be supported in all parishes. There is an awareness, however, within the SLT and Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Group of the need to develop a better understanding of the reach of a theological understanding within parishes.

Questions for the Diocese to consider:

- How can the Diocese better assist all parishes to understand the centrality of safeguarding to the Catholic mission?
- What can be put in place to help the diocesan leadership understand better the extent of a consistent message across all parishes?
- How can the Bishop reinforce the theological message of safeguarding across deaneries and parishes?
- How can the theological messages of safeguarding be integrated more effectively across all aspects of diocesan life including training?

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP FOR SAFEGUARDING

Introduction

- 2.1.13 Strategic and operational leadership are commonly considered essential aspects of the leadership and governance of organisations. Strategic leadership develops the vision and mission, strategies, systems and structures for achieving that vision and overall accountability. Operational leadership delivers that vision and mission on a day-to-day basis. Roles and forums for strategic leadership and governance exist in dioceses to cover a range of areas and activities, e.g. Bishop's/Archbishop's Councils. It is useful therefore to consider how strategic leadership is provided for safeguarding in the context of these fora.

- 2.1.14 IGLv2 sets out the Bishop's role in terms of local safeguarding arrangements and at 6.2.1 states:

The bishop is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the safeguarding arrangements within his diocese are properly embedded within a culture of care. Above all, in his manner of reaching out and responding to survivors, the bishop must provide a powerful example of humility, Christian love and compassion. In appointing competent, qualified, and experienced individuals to key safeguarding posts, he will ensure that the strategic planning and organisation of safeguarding are secure and well regulated.

(Bishops' Conference of Scotland 2021, p.68)

- 2.1.15 Furthermore, IGLv2 now speaks to "*Church leaders showing personal commitment to,*

and strategic planning of, safeguarding (p.74). It is easier for organisations to be clear of progress and improvements if the objectives and actions to take are set out in a **strategic plan**. For the diocese, a work plan would set out how the safeguarding service will be developed and who will lead on the different aspects of achieving the plan. Although not outlined *In God's Image*, governance of the delivery of this plan would logically sit within the local governance arrangements of each diocese. Setting out the goals of the service and tracking progress against them enhances accountability and should assist operational leadership by identifying barriers to development that need to be addressed.

Description

- 2.1.16 In the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles, the Bishop is fully responsible for safeguarding and appointed the Vicar General as Vicar Episcopal for Safeguarding as a symbol of the importance given to safeguarding in the diocese. The Vicar General acts with the Bishop's authority and is also a Trustee. Strategic oversight of safeguarding sits with the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Group (DSAG), which meets quarterly. The daily operational business of safeguarding is progressed by the Safeguarding Leadership Team (SLT) which has reported formally to the DSAG since 2018.
- 2.1.17 The diocesan safeguarding action plan is overseen by the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Group which meets quarterly. Actions outlined in the safeguarding action plan are progressed by the SLT which reports on progress at the quarterly DSAG meetings. The safeguarding action plan is currently being revised and updated for 2021-2022. Safeguarding is also a standing item at each quarterly meeting of the Trustees for which the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor attends in person to discuss report on progress and any relevant issues arising. Safeguarding is also a standing item at each biannual clergy assembly.
- 2.1.18 The diocese is currently drafting a Safeguarding Manual for both trustees and those who work within the diocese on matters of safeguarding. The manual brings together and sets out trustees' safeguarding responsibilities, the framework for governance and risk management, a structural chart, information about the safeguarding strategic plan and the key indicators against which performance will be measured. It also sets out a range of policies in relation to safeguarding and a flowchart outlines how allegations or concerns will be managed. It also includes risk register templates for use within parishes. Finally, the manual includes a continuity and contingency plan which outlines the actions required during or immediately following an emergency incident that threatens to disrupt normal safeguarding activities to help ensure the continuity of critical services.
- 2.1.19 The performance measures identified in the manual include indicators in relation to diocesan processes such as: the number of new allegations for which the diocese may be responsible; allegations responded to within 24 hours and reported to statutory authorities within 24 hours; any breach of policies and procedures identified; training and the evaluation or feedback from training and an annual appraisal of trainers; timely updates of PPG applications and checks; and vacancies in safeguarding roles across the diocese.
- 2.1.20 There is a consistent message that the Bishop works hard to demonstrate good strategic leadership across the diocese and to be visible in all parishes including the most remote. The Bishop invites comments and proposals for discussion in relation to safeguarding to inform the plan during clergy and deanery meetings, Council of

Priests and Clergy Assembly.

Analysis

- 2.1.21 Strategic leadership within the diocese is a key strength and there are further good developments in progress. The development of the safeguarding manual is excellent and provides a clear document for those involved in safeguarding and also provides transparency in the strategic and operational approach of the diocese. It is clearly written and laid out, and provides further links should an individual within the diocese require further information or advice.
- 2.1.22 The inclusion of information about the safeguarding strategic plan in the manual is important, but the auditors reflected that this information could also be extracted and combined with the safeguarding action plan and key performance indicators to provide a more robust strategic plan against which progress can be measured. It would be helpful if this overarching strategic plan could set out a clear articulation of the diocese' vision for the next three to five years and develop some indicators to measure quality as well as the process indicators already identified.
- 2.1.23 Oversight for the safeguarding strategic plan would remain with the DSAG, but there are other fora in which this strategic plan could be shared to promote a consistent understanding of the vision of the diocese. This could include with Trustees and perhaps the Council of Priests and deaneries.
- 2.1.24 The links and accountability between the trustees, DSAG and the SLT are clear and strong and together with the manual and a longer-term strategy for safeguarding provide an excellent basis for developing a governance framework which builds on past evaluations to form a continuous programme of improvement and review.

Questions for the Diocese to consider

- Who needs to be involved in developing the diocesan strategic safeguarding plan to include a strategic vision of the diocese, and processes and measures related to quality assurance?
- How might the diocese make best use of the strategic plan in other fora to strengthen safeguarding work and strengthen oversight?
- Where can the diocese look for help with developing a governance framework to enable a continuous programme of improvement and review?

OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF SAFEGUARDING

Introduction

- 2.1.25 Senior clergy leadership and management of the operational work of safeguarding is needed to provide oversight of safeguarding in a diocese including identifying any barriers to implementation that need tackling. It is also needed for accountability purposes, particularly when the safeguarding service is delivered through collaboration between clerics, staff and laity. Operational leadership and management by the clergy can be seen as providing a strong link to the strategic leadership of

senior clergy and ultimately the Bishop. It is distinct from an operational decision-making responsibility.

- 2.1.26 There are inherent challenges to clergy as non-safeguarding specialists fulfilling the operational leadership and oversight of safeguarding, given it is a specialist function. Leaving the centralised operations of safeguarding in a diocese without any clergy-led governance and oversight, however, would also weaken the safety of safeguarding arrangements.

Description

- 2.1.27 Operational leadership for safeguarding is delegated to the Vicar General, who works closely with the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA) and Bishop and, as mentioned previously, this work is overseen by the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Group. The Bishop is part of decision-making processes and there is a collegiate approach to safeguarding work. There is a strong message from the Bishop and senior clergy that there will be no cover-ups and that pastoral care and support is available for all.
- 2.1.28 The Bishop is clear that whilst decision-making in relation to clergy is very difficult, it is not a conflict of interest as a Bishop's key roles are teaching, spiritual leadership and governance. The Bishop also reflected that keeping individuals, who have been significantly harmed, at the heart of decision-making helps to keep the focus on ethical and just decision-making.
- 2.1.29 Approachability is important to the Bishop, especially on matters of safeguarding. The Bishop visits each Parish regularly and meets at the bi-annual assemblies. Ninety-two per cent of survey respondents thought visibility of senior clergy in their parish was good or average (n=26) with a few recording it was poor. This might be as a consequence of Covid-19 and lockdown. All, however, thought that communication by senior clergy on the importance of safeguarding was good or average with 85% replying it was good (n=26). The auditors also saw evidence of good and regular communication between the DSA and the Bishop with good recording of discussions and decisions made by the SLT and DSAG.
- 2.1.30 *Participants* involved in operational work were acutely aware that the diocese has dealt with fewer concerns and cases than by other areas across Scotland. To compensate, the diocese has reviewed the membership of the DSAG to ensure a range of expertise and knowledge. It was evident from the case files that the diocese has also built relationships with neighbouring diocese or archdiocese and uses those networks for advice and support. There was also evidence from the casefiles of the rationale for decisions taken and a willingness to review cases to enhance learning.
- 2.1.31 The Bishop advised that the previous Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service had provided advice and support, and assisted in quality assuring operational safeguarding casework. The service is being replaced with the newly formed Safeguarding Standards Agency and it is not yet clear how or whether such a role will be taken forward with the new agency.
- 2.1.32 Finally, there was recognition by members of the DSAG of the significant challenge for the Vicar General and the Bishop in terms of the need to be both operational and strategic, and for the need to consider the welfare of all including the clergy. *Contributors* also acknowledged the importance of victims and families being properly supported and the need to support, train and debrief those involved when an individual discloses abuse.

Analysis

- 2.1.33 While there may be fewer cases, the diocese is strong operationally. This is partly because there is clear thinking about the process of managing operational cases, which is currently being formalised, and partly because the diocese seeks appropriate advice and support if there is a lack of experience locally. The Bishop and senior clergy also take responsibility for making difficult decisions.
- 2.1.34 From *Participants* and case files, it is clear that the clergy retain operational leadership across the diocese and work effectively with lay team members. It is also clear that as practice has developed, the Bishop and senior clergy have grown in confidence in demonstrating operational leadership.

Questions for the Diocese to consider

- How might the diocese link effectively with the new national standards agency?
- What are the best mechanisms to disseminate the new formal process for managing the operation of safeguarding out to all parishes?
- How might the diocese formalise the process of ongoing audit and review to support operational leadership?

DEALING WITH THE LEGACY OF A HIGH-PROFILE CONVICTION

Introduction

- 2.1.35 Across all settings, dealing with the legacy of a high-profile case of abuse presents opportunities and challenges. Assuming leadership of a diocese with a high-profile case of clergy abuse is no different. A change of leadership creates the possibility to focus on restorative practice:
- to help all affected parties come to terms with the facts, the betrayal and the possibility of their own, albeit unwitting, part in allowing abusers to go unchecked;
 - to identify and right any wrongs of the past, working closely and compassionately with survivors to hear and respond to what they need.
- 2.1.36 It is challenging, however, when the prominent member of senior clergy has formed close working relationships and friendships with many in the Diocese, when survivors and others past efforts to bring the abuse to light have not been responded to appropriately and there is inevitable loyalty to your predecessors. The response by Bishops to these issues are key to setting the tone of their leadership and the tenor of the safeguarding culture they are trying to propagate.

Description

- 2.1.37 While there are no current high-profile cases in Argyll and the Isles, there are non-recent cases which continue to have ramifications today for individuals, local parishes and the diocese. There was awareness from the Bishop and across the Safeguarding Leadership Team (SLT) that some individuals are still living with trauma due to the abuse experienced within the church and that the actions of clergy in some parishes had split communities.
- 2.1.38 Part of the diocese response was to acknowledge publicly past abusive behaviours

and events through preparation of a public apology from the Bishop to all those living across Argyll and the Isles and for the diocese to be more active in reaching out to all communities to engage with individuals regardless of whether they are involved with the church. This is evidenced in the reflections of the self-audits submitted as part of this audit and discussions recorded within DSAG minutes.

Analysis

2.1.39 The diocese has taken the important first step of acknowledging the hurt and damage caused by past events and behaviour of clergy. The diocese is in a strong position to now consider next steps.

2.1.40 In 2015 and as President of the Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Tartaglia issued a public apology following publication of the McLellan Report (McLellan Commission 2015) set up by the Bishops' Conference of Scotland to investigate allegations of abuse within the catholic church. Many welcomed this apology, but many who have experienced abuse and trauma within the church were unaware of the apology or felt this should have been the start of further discussion and dialogue with the church.

2.1.41 The public apology by the Bishop is welcomed and in light of what has been reported to this and previous audits, thought should be given to how best to reach out more to communities. Suggestions included publishing the Bishop's apology on the diocesan website to allow individuals to re-visit the apology in their own time. It is also timely on consider how this apology might form the start of a process of a wider conversation and engagement.

Questions for the Diocese to consider

- How can the Diocese prepare itself to manage any non-recent allegations related to past cases, or any future cases?
- Should the Diocese consider a forward plan for helping to heal a Parish and support all those involved and, if so, how will this be taken forward?

2.2 DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING ADVISOR

Introduction

2.2.1 The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor along with the DSAG and DRAMT remain key to the infrastructure. As set out in *In God's Image* v2, the role is to advise and assist the Bishop to fulfil safeguarding responsibilities.

2.2.2 The role is summarised at 6.2.2:

The role of the diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) is to advise and assist the bishop in meeting his safeguarding responsibilities. These include endeavouring to protect children and vulnerable adults in their contact with Church personnel, in Church activities, and on Church

property.

(Bishops' Conference of Scotland)

2.2.3 IGIv2 continues that the DSA is responsible for:

- co-ordinating efforts to raise awareness of safeguarding within parish communities, including the training of PSCs, the recruiting of diocesan safeguarding trainers and the safeguarding training of diocesan clergy.
- advise the bishop on good practice in responding to safeguarding concerns and allegations of abuse
- collaborating closely, not only within their diocesan teams, but with safeguarding colleagues across the country, as well as with the statutory authorities; and
- as the main link between the diocese and the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency, the DSA is responsible for promoting national safeguarding standards and demonstrating compliance with them.

2.2.4 Membership of DSAG must include the DSA (6.2.3) and, in relation to the DRAMT (6.2.7), the DSA should provide support and, in the absence of any allegations for any significant period of time, provide some scenarios of the types of allegations that might arise. In this way the DRAMT will be able to discuss the management of risk and develop their understanding of the complex situations that might arise at any time.

2.2.5 It is recommended that the DSA role should be undertaken by an appropriately qualified and experienced layperson.

Description

RESOURCING AND RELATIVE ROLES

2.2.6 The DSA in Argyll and the Isles is relatively new in post, but has a background in social work and social work management. The DSA previously fulfilled the role as parish safeguarding coordinator and as a long-standing Diocesan Safeguarding Trainer has delivered training throughout the diocese. The post is voluntary and the DSA works between two to three days per week.

2.2.7 The DSA describes the role as both operational in terms of casework and strategic in terms of the management of strategic safeguarding and having an overview of safeguarding across the diocese via the DSAG. The DSA deals with all queries in relation to safeguarding and maintains regular links with parish safeguarding coordinators. The DSA is a member of the DSAG and DRAMT, and attends quarterly meetings of the Trustees to report, update and discuss relevant issues in relation to safeguarding.

RESOURCES

2.2.8 Due to the pandemic and the geography of Argyll and the Isles, the DSA works mainly from home. As the restrictions on society have reduced, the DSA is travelling to Oban as and when it is necessary and appropriate. Cover arrangements for the role are through the Vicar General.

2.2.9 Informal support and advice is available to the DSA through three routes. As the DSA is fairly new to the role, the previous DSA, who has significant experience in the role

and is also a member of the DRAMT, is available to provide informal support. There is regular contact with the DSAs across the other Scottish diocese and archdiocese in relation to national developments, policies and procedures and, finally, the DSA links with the DSAs in neighbouring diocese or archdiocese to seek advice and support as necessary and appropriate.

QUALIFICATIONS

2.2.10 As mentioned above, the DSA is a qualified social worker (now retired), who worked across both children and families, and adult services. The DSA has longstanding experience in safeguarding and multi-agency working.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

2.2.11 There are no known conflicts of interest for the DSA in this role.

LINE MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION ARRANGEMENTS

2.2.12 The DSA reports to the Vicar General and is also supported by a part-time Safeguarding Secretary. Employment-based supervision is provided by the Vicar General, who along with the Bishop also provide opportunities for discussion in relation to operational case work. No formal or external case supervision is in place, but this is one area which has been identified for development within the safeguarding action plan.

Analysis

2.2.13 The DSA brings a high level of expertise to the role. Her professional background and experience in a range of roles within local parishes means that the DSA has a good understanding of the processes and practice of safeguarding at diocesan level and also of local issues at parish level.

2.2.14 The DSA works closely with the other members of Safeguarding Leadership Team (SLT) and there is evidence from observations, conversations as part of the audit and documentary analysis of open, effective and respectful relationships. Regular links with PSCs and trainers are evident and described by survey participants as strong although the SLT recognises this needs to be reviewed as the diocese and local communities emerge from the pandemic.

2.2.15 The auditors felt the role of the DSA in Argyll and the Isles works very well. The role is voluntary at the request of the DSA and this arrangement currently works although this should be subject to ongoing review. The DSA is well respected and highly committed to making a difference and improving safeguarding across the diocese. The DSA is fully supported by the Bishop, Vicar General and Safeguarding Secretary and makes good and appropriate use of the range of informal support networks.

2.2.16 Similar to other diocese, it is a challenge to keep the role of the DSA from growing beyond descriptions within *In God's Image* v2. The identification within the diocese' action plan of the need for formal supervision is welcome and fully supported by the auditors, and as mentioned above the voluntary arrangements in place should be

subject to regular review.

Questions for the Diocese to consider

- How might the diocese formally review the role of the DSA in order to ensure it remains tenable?

2.3 DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING GROUP (DSAG)

Introduction

2.3.1 The DSAG along with the DRAMT and the DSA is a core part of the safeguarding infrastructure, whose function it is to support the Bishop in his responsibilities for safeguarding.

2.3.2 Within *In God's Image v2*, the role and membership of the DSAG is set out at 6.2.3:

'The diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Group (DSAG) should consist of people with relevant experience and skills, appointed by the bishop to support the DSA and to ensure diocesan-wide adherence to the safeguarding standards to which the bishop is co-signatory. Their responsibilities should also include analysis of the annual safeguarding audits, the formulation of the diocesan safeguarding action plan and the planning of relevant safeguarding training for clergy, religious, PSCs and volunteers. Membership of DSAG must include the DSA. Its work may be enhanced by the involvement of representatives of relevant diocesan groups – e.g., Pilgrimage leaders, SPREd, Youth Office, and religious congregations – for whom safeguarding is particularly significant.'

(IGlv2 2021, p.68)

2.3.3 Section 8.3.1-8.3.3 set out the DSAG's monitoring role and considering the implications of results of the parish audit for training, support and further improvements. This analysis and reflection, together with any recommendations emerging from any independent reviews of safeguarding practice, should enable the DSAG to prepare a safeguarding action plan that will address some areas of improvement required within the diocese over the subsequent year. The actions planned should be measurable and achievable, and focussed on the intended outcomes of each action.

Description

2.3.4 In line with *IGlv2*, the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles has a Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Group (DSAG). The DSAG is chaired by the bishop and attended by the Vicar General, DSA and Safeguarding Secretary. Other members include representation from health, education, social work and from a local Catholic Retreat Centre. In addition to representation of professionals involved in safeguarding, individuals also represent the views of parish priests, parish safeguarding coordinators and training. All members' names are made available on the diocesan

website.

- 2.3.5 A recent review identified that membership should be widened to include the perspective of an individual who was not a member of the catholic faith and to widen geographical representation which was felt to have been drawn previously from Oban and its surrounds on grounds of the practicalities for travel. Prior to the pandemic, equipment was purchased to ensure that communication through virtual links was effective allowing full participation of members who lived further away including on the islands. Membership was extended to include an individual from a different faith background with extensive experience in safeguarding. The significant shift to use of technology during the pandemic saw a greater confidence within the population in use of virtual environments which will support the continued wider participation from those in remote and rural areas, and from the islands.
- 2.3.6 On joining the DSAG, all members complete a proforma which asks for their background details, an outline of relevant training and skills for the role, and to identify any gaps in skills or experience across the membership. The auditors were provided with minutes from the DSAG which demonstrated a good range of subjects discussed and how actions identified within the action plan are brought to the attention of each DSAG.
- 2.3.7 The safeguarding action plan is updated annually informed by DSAG discussion and the annual audit, which for several years has achieved 100% return rate. In addition, the one local retreat centre also submits an annual return. Both the DSA and the member with oversight of training provide updates to each DSAG.
- 2.3.8 From conversations held as part of the audit, there were reflections that the DSAG has a role in promoting a culture that recognises safeguarding is important and needs to develop through scrutiny, training and appropriate policy development. *Participants* spoke of huge determination and dedication *'to get this right'* and good collaboration. Members felt very able to contribute and challenge.
- 2.3.9 In terms of moving forward, *Participants* identified that representation from younger members of the diocese should be encouraged. The biggest challenges are to create *'a visible tangible culture of care in allowing and supporting survivors to come forward'* and to acknowledge and deal with the issues of the past sensitively whilst also moving forward. It is important that survivors feel there is value in approaching the Church.

Analysis

- 2.3.10 The current arrangements for the DSAG are effective and the recent changes to broaden membership in terms of perspectives and communities represented is a positive development. The action plan appears to be a dynamic document and remit of the DSAG covers all aspects within *In God's Image v2*. This includes the review of training for volunteers, best practice protocols for managing disclosures and oversight of PVGs. In addition, the DSAG is developing further aspects to its quality assurance such as an evaluation of its appraisal process for trainers. Also welcomed is the proforma completed by new DSAG members as it sets the tone of engagement and seeking views from the outset. The only aspect missing is a terms of reference for the DSAG and whilst responsibilities are set out within *IG/v2*, it might be useful for the diocese to set out its own terms of reference when developing the DSAG procedure, as per the 2022 Diocesan Action Plan.
- 2.3.11 Within the membership, there is a strong understanding of safeguarding, the need for a strategic approach, a good understanding of the importance of quality assurance and self-evaluation and good self-reflection of potential gaps in knowledge. The

auditors agreed with *Participants* that key challenges are the need to continue to create a culture of care and to extend the reach out to, and support for, survivors. There is little proactive outreach for those requiring support although the diocese responds supportively when individuals come forward.

2.3.12 The Diocesan Safeguarding Action Plan is clear and comprehensive providing a good basis from which the DSAG is able to prioritise. As mentioned in section 2.1 (strategic leadership), the auditors suggest this plan is located within a wider diocesan strategic plan which sets out a clear long term vision. This would allow broader strategic thinking and planning by the DSAG with clearer links to governance and quality assurance structures.

2.3.13 It was unclear if the Safeguarding Manual currently under development is intended for DSAG members. The auditors felt this would be a useful document for DSAG members as it sets out the safeguarding frameworks and policies of the diocese. In terms of the DSAG, it might be useful to include its terms of reference within the safeguarding manual.

Questions for the Diocese to consider

- How might the Safeguarding Action Plan be further developed into a broader Strategic Diocesan Safeguarding Plan spanning a longer length of time?
- How might the Safeguarding Manual, incorporating a wider terms of reference for the DSAG beyond that in IGI be best utilised and taken forward?
- What needs to be in place both strategically and operationally to better support survivors and to create a culture of care in which those who have not yet come forward feel safe to do so?

2.4 DIOCESE RISK ASSESSMENT MANAGEMENT TEAM (DRAMT)

Introduction

2.4.1 *In God's Image* sets out that the DRAMT along with the DSAG and the DSA is a core part of the safeguarding infrastructure, whose function it is to support the Bishop in his responsibilities for safeguarding.

2.4.2 In section 6.2.4, *IGIv2* states that:

Members of the diocesan Risk Assessment Management Team (DRAMT) are appointed by the bishop to assist him, within the strict limits of the law, in the management of individual cases where allegations have been made against a diocesan cleric, employee or volunteer. This team's advice and recommendations should assist the bishop to come to decisions about how to proceed, in accordance with both civil and canon law, in response to reported allegations and concerns. The DRAMT should comprise a small number of individuals with relevant expertise, including those with experience of working in the legal profession, in canon law, in healthcare,

social work and the Police. Its composition should be mixed, in numbers of ordained and lay members, and in their gender.

(Bishops' Conference of Scotland 2021, p.68)

- 2.4.3 The detail of the DRAMT outlined in the document does not address the previous identified potential conflicts of interest. These hinge on the advisory nature of the DRAMT. The DRAMT gives advice and recommendations, but decision-making authority remains with the Bishop/Archbishop. This means he is making decisions about the clergy, employees or volunteers for whom he also has pastoral responsibilities. The relationship between a volunteer and Bishop may be more distant, but Bishops appoint and ordain priests, make decisions about many aspects of their lives and have the responsibility for their pastoral care, including when they have safeguarding allegations made against them (see Standard five). This makes it essential that there are clear processes for identifying and dealing with disagreements where they emerge between the DRAMT and Bishop/Archbishop so they can be resolved swiftly and transparently.

Description

- 2.4.4 Similar to other dioceses across Scotland, Argyll and the Isles has a small DRAMT due to the confidential nature of the cases and issues discussed. The DSA chairs the meeting and there is representation from the clergy (Vicar General) and from the police, law, social work and child psychiatry. All concerns reported to the diocese are automatically referred to the DRAMT and the DSA is in the final stages of designing a useful flowchart outlining decision-making processes within safeguarding.
- 2.4.5 This flowchart also identifies what action should be taken when no referral is required to statutory authorities or safeguarding is not involved. This includes concerns, which are referred initially as safeguarding, but evolve into issues about conduct in the workplace or are in relation to the health or mental health of individuals. In these cases, discussion will identify whether action is required, which other agencies may need to be involved and who is responsible for progressing the case. Recommendations are then identified on all concerns and referrals, and reported to the Bishop.
- 2.4.6 Meetings are called when required and although there is not a high number of cases, the DRAMT meet regularly. From the conversations and documentary evidence, there appears a dynamic, two-way process of communication between the DRAMT and the Bishop. *Participants* feel the DRAMT works well and the team comes together quickly once an allegation emerges and discussion are open and transparent. Each concern is carefully considered and decisions recorded and reported to the Bishop. At times, this has included the offer or suggestion of pastoral support to those involved in a case.
- 2.4.7 Equally, the Bishop's recent review of all open cases to determine which should remain open and which could be closed was discussed by the DRAMT. An extraordinary DRAMT meeting was called attended by the Bishop with the final decision on each case made in collaboration with the DRAMT. Each decision was recorded with the reasons given. This was seen from the documentary evidence submitted as part of this audit. This was apparent from the record of DRAMT discussions and documentary evidence submitted as part of this audit.
- 2.4.8 The DRAMT does not have a formal terms of reference other than those cited in *In God's Image v2*. There was reflection from one or two *Participants* of the need to clarify processes following feedback that not all members were clear about the

processes involved. This had prompted the development of the flowchart. The DSA is also producing protocols for the DRAMT including the process for managing disagreements and recognising there could be a conflict of interest for the Bishop. This is already included in the procedure document referred to in the 2022 Diocesan Action Plan.

- 2.4.9 The potential conflict of interest for the Bishop in decision-making in relation to priests was discussed with *Participants*. The Bishop was clear that while it could be very difficult, it was nevertheless part of the Bishop's overarching role of providing spiritual guidance, pastoral care and support and governance for priests. In addition, keeping the individual, who has been harmed, at the centre of decision-making helped to keep focus and avoid conflicts of interest.
- 2.4.10 *Participants* also identified some key challenges. One challenge is the lack of regular complex cases for the DRAMT to discuss and the need to set up training or development days for members to consider practice cases. Other challenges identified included the need to develop or grow the support and pastoral care available for survivors, the need to develop an understanding of the impact on individuals of emotional, spiritual and psychological abuse and to develop better understanding of how best to work alongside and support individuals affected. Finally, *Participants* were aware that the new agency is in its infancy so it will be important to keep linked with its progress.

Analysis

- 2.4.11 Membership and arrangements for the DRAMT are in place and there is a good and appropriate range of knowledge, skills and experience across members. There is awareness of the remit of the DRAMT and members are clear about their role in terms of making recommendations. From the documentary evidence, it is clear there is good use of the DRAMT in responding to immediate concerns and allegations and also in reviewing cases to ensure that there is no drift. The respectful relationships allow for robust discussion and challenge. There appears a genuine commitment from clergy and laity about '*doing the right thing*', which is also welcomed.
- 2.4.12 The development of the flowchart is excellent as is the development of supporting protocols which also address the process for managing disagreements; for example, should the Bishop disagree or fail to accept recommendations from the DRAMT. The Bishop is clear that he would not disregard the recommendations of the DRAMT, but this is in the context of current respectful relationships rather than process. It is important to have this in place as it demonstrates transparency in safeguarding processes and provides a framework if there is challenge to decision-making or there are changes in membership which impact on the current open and respectful relationships. One additional suggestion would be to produce a terms of reference for the DRAMT to be included in the safeguarding manual.
- 2.4.13 Due to the confidential nature of the issues discussed, DRAMTs are, by nature, small. In 2021, the diocese identified and engaged a small group of professionals from backgrounds not represented on the DRAMT, which could be approached for advice and support on individual cases, as and when required, and at short notice. The auditors felt this a helpful approach in allowing for relevant expertise to inform individual cases while keeping those involved to a minimum and suggest that this should continue. This could include drawing on the knowledge and experience of DSAG members.
- 2.4.14 The auditors also welcome reflections by *Participants* that, while the processes are

clear, there has been less opportunity to put this into practice due to fewer cases. The auditors are aware that the diocese is at the consultation stage of a DRAMT procedure document which addresses the need to develop hypothetical or anonymised cases and for formalised plans to be put in place for training or development day for DRAMT members. This is already included in the procedure document referred to in their 2022 Diocesan Action Plan. Overall, the auditors were struck by, and agreed with, the thoughtful reflections of *Participants* of the challenges and areas of development moving forward.

Questions for the Diocese to consider

- Should the DRAMT have terms of reference, tailored to the diocese but based on *In God's Image*?
- How might the diocese formally broaden the pool of expertise from which it can draw DRAMT membership?
- How might the diocese test capacity and effectiveness of the DRAMT using adapted cases?
- How can the Diocese mitigate against any disagreement between the DRAMT members, the DSA and the Bishop including plans for escalation if required?

2.5 LINKS WITH SCOTTISH CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING SERVICE

Introduction

2.5.1 The recent publication of *IGlv2* has stated that: '*At the time of publication, the Bishops' Conference of Scotland have decided to replace SCSS with the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (SCSSA)*' (p.73). The role of this new agency will include:

- developing and promoting the 'culture of care' that should be the hallmark of the Church's safeguarding efforts;
- providing strategic leadership and direction in safeguarding to all components of the Church in Scotland;
- promoting and regulating consistent compliance with safeguarding standards; and
- co-ordinating a safeguarding complaints system that is transparent.

Analysis

2.5.2 The role of the new agency is set out in *IGlv2*. The appointment of board members has now been published. The agency is not yet fully in place with operational posts currently being advertised. Clarity is needed on the task and roles which will fall to the

national agency and which are the responsibility of each diocese.

Questions for the Diocese to consider:

- How might the Diocese take forward ideas for a different model and structure with the SCSSA and BCOS?

2.6 GUIDANCE, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

2.6.1 A working group of DSAs developed a set of templates for essential policies and procedures which should be in place within each Diocese and Archdiocese to each of the standards within *In God's Image v2*.

Description

2.6.2 The Diocese of Argyll and the Isles has several comprehensive policies in place in line with *IG/v2*. The Vicar General had developed a manual for the use of trustees and those working within the diocese in delivery safeguarding. As mentioned earlier, this helpfully brings information together on:

- Trustees safeguarding responsibilities;
- Governance and risk management cycle;
- Safeguarding personnel structure chart;
- Safeguarding strategic plan including the objectives for the year and identifying who was responsible and a list of associated policies and procedures including safeguarding standards of conduct, key performance indicators;
- Flowchart for managing safeguarding allegations or concerns;
- Information about the risk register with identified risk levels;
- Diocese' referrals policy;
- Policy for individuals who are under consideration for listing or barring;
- Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) notable events guide;
- Secure handling policy (data protection);
- Whistleblowing policy; and
- Continuity and contingency plan which identifies and addresses any occurrences which would have an effect on the ability of the diocese to carry out its safeguarding obligations.

2.6.3 The diocese also has a section of its website dedicated to safeguarding. This hosts a range of information on safeguarding including advice and contact details for those wishing to raise concerns or seek support (discussed further in section 2.9), information on safeguarding processes, links to all independent reports and audits

including those produced by SCIE and the Independent Review Group and safeguarding information for visiting clergy. Some individual parishes also have a website with information in relation to safeguarding.

- 2.6.4 The diocese has also produced a handbook for parish safeguarding coordinators (discussed further in section 2.12) which outlines the key policies and procedures for those undertaking that role and where to seek further advice and support.

Analysis

- 2.6.5 The range of policies, procedures and guidance are well written and comprehensive. The materials produced to date and in development are informative, clear and well formatted. Together they operationalise *IG/v2* from the perspective of what might help people in their various roles. They help communicate the expectations of the diocese for safeguarding, set the policies and procedures with the governance structure and should help drive a more consistent approach across all parishes.
- 2.6.6 Some suggestions are to make the whistleblowing policy available on the website, consider sharing the safeguarding manual with deaneries and parishes when finalised and perhaps support all parishes in the development of a local website to ensure that all across the diocese have access to the same information locally.

Questions for the Diocese to consider

- How might the Diocese take forward localising the positive information already contained within current policies?

2.7 COMPLAINTS AND WHISTLEBLOWING

Introduction

- 2.7.1 A complaints process is required so that anyone who has contact with the Diocese about safeguarding knows how to complain should they feel that they need to. 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. The outcome of complaints enables an organisation to learn from those who have had to use their service, enabling them to make any necessary changes or improvements.
- 2.7.2 Whistleblowing and complaints procedures can be part of a general complaints procedure, but it is important that the process for making a complaint about the safeguarding response or service is clear and is different from sharing safeguarding concerns or allegations. *In God's Image v2* sets out at 8.6.4:

'In collaboration with dioceses and religious institutes, the SCSSA will co-ordinate a national policy on a tiered process of responding to a complaint about how a safeguarding allegation has been handled in any jurisdiction. Anyone wishing to make such a complaint will be able to do so, either to the original diocese/religious institute which handled the allegation or directly to SCSSA. The process will include, as a final stage, a case review managed by an independent party.'

(Bishops' Conference of Scotland 2021, p.89)

Description

- 2.7.3 The Diocese of Argyll and the Isles has both a safeguarding whistleblowing and complaints policy, both of which are published on the diocesan website. The auditors thought it would be helpful to have links to both policies within the safeguarding pages on the website. The whistleblowing policy outlines what the individual can expect in terms of how they will be treated, the process and timescales.
- 2.7.4 The complaints policy states the diocese commitment to taking complaints seriously and how to make a complaint to the Bishop. In one case audited, an individual had requested a review of decision-making and the diocese had started the process of identifying an individual external to the safeguarding team and diocese to undertake the review. The individual later withdrew the request.

Analysis

- 2.7.5 The auditors judged the whistleblowing policy to be good, but the complaints policy could include further information about how complaints will be handled, the timescales involved and what routes are available if an individual is unhappy with the outcome. The diocese commented, however, that the complaints policy had been amended in light of feedback from the Council of Priests and to align with canon law. Nevertheless, the auditors felt more detail was needed and this was perhaps a discussion at national level at the Bishop's conference. The practice in terms of managing complaints and responding to complaints on decision-making is in place, so it is important that this is set out in a clear policy. Both policies should be included in the Diocese safeguarding manual, and available on the diocese and parish websites.

Questions for the Diocese to consider

- How should the Diocese take forward a review of the Complaints Policy, disseminating this widely across all parishes?

2.8 CASEWORK

Introduction

- 2.8.1 In order to manage concerns well and respond to allegations there must be a system in place which clearly defines escalation for seeking advice regarding concerns and reports of abuse. There should be effective and clear recording of issues and incidents which are kept securely and are compliant with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018. Integral to managing concerns well is the requirement to work jointly with statutory agencies and to debrief and reflect on any areas of weakness in order to improve practice.
- 2.8.2 The auditors looked at a range of casework material that was identified by the Diocese as related to safeguarding. These included general enquiries dealt with by the DSA.
- 2.8.3 The auditors focused on recording systems, quality of response to allegations,

information sharing, risk assessments and safeguarding agreements. For this section description and analysis are presented together for each sub-section.

RECORDING SYSTEMS

Description

2.8.4 Case files are in paper form. All are held by the Bishop and paper files are kept in a locked cabinet. New cases are provided with a case number and have a chronology. Associated files are clearly cross-referenced. One key action from the safeguarding action plan is for the diocese to transfer records across to the Church's new electronic case file system when launched.

Analysis

2.8.5 The safeguarding casefiles are well presented and well organised with clear chronologies. Files contained both contemporaneous notes and written notes of the case and were easy to follow. Where appropriate, case files were clearly cross-referenced. The reasons for decisions made were also clear.

Questions for the Diocese to consider

- There are no questions for the Diocese to consider.

QUALITY OF RESPONSE TO CONCERNS AND ALLEGATIONS AND INFORMATION SHARING

Description

2.8.6 As mentioned, Argyll and the Isles had fewer cases within the timescale of the audit and the timescale was extended to include a range of safeguarding allegations and concerns managed by the diocese. From all casefiles, it is clear that allegations or concerns raised are addressed and initial responses are swift in that all concerns are referred to the DRAMT.

2.8.7 *Participants* acknowledged the central role of parish priest and parish safeguarding coordinators locally for individuals coming forward. The auditors heard a range of views about levels of confidence across both groups in responding to concerns and allegations. All were confident about the processes involved and knew where to report concerns. There was less confidence, however, about how best to respond to individuals who begin to disclose. Two main concerns emerged.

2.8.8 The first was in relation to individuals – mainly parish priests - being able to balance the need to be sensitive and listening when an individual is disclosing and may be distressed with making sure the individual is clear about with whom information will be shared, for what purpose and the Church's policy on mandatory reporting. The mandatory reporting policy means that disclosures of harm or abuse, past or present are reported to Police Scotland in all cases regardless of whether or not the individual wishes to contact the police.

2.8.9 The reason for this policy had been to bring more openness and transparency within the Church's processes for individuals who may disclose alleged abuse. There was

genuine concern within the diocese that without this policy, greater transparency would not be assured and, as it is not the role of the Church to investigate allegations, others involved in abusive behaviours or those at risk of harm may not be identified. The auditors heard concerns, however, from *Contributors* that this can create anxiety as those disclosing may feel a loss of control in terms of sharing highly personal information.

- 2.8.10 The second concern raised was the ability to respond appropriately and sensitively to an individual who may be hypersensitive at the point of disclosure and experiencing trauma, and also understanding both direct and indirect signals for help. Disclosing abuse is the start of a process for individuals and not a one-off event; sometimes individuals might need significant support following disclosure. The need to provide support to both individuals disclosing and to clergy was recognised in the reflections of some *Participants*.
- 2.8.11 The response to allegations was also raised by the few *Contributors* who felt there was an inconsistent response by clergy. They felt that greater understanding is needed in terms of working with trauma and also understanding that alongside being abused sexually, individuals experience emotional, psychological and spiritual harm and abuse. While the auditors spoke with only a few *Contributors* as part of this audit, their comments reflect views from a greater number of *Contributors* to previous audits.
- 2.8.12 At diocesan level, action is taken on all cases including those which may have been referred as a safeguarding issue, but it later transpires to be an issue in relation to workplace conduct or an individual's circumstances. All workplace conduct matters are referred to the Bishop and further work is undertaken with individuals to make sure they are linked with appropriate support or statutory agencies if necessary. Occasionally, there was a lack of clarity about the links with and role of the previous Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service in local cases.
- 2.8.13 Case files show supportive and sensitive handling with pastoral support offered to all involved. All those making allegations or raising concerns are provided with an offer of support and an opportunity to talk through what has happened with the Bishop. Auditors saw evidence of the Bishop meeting with individuals to hear and listen to their concerns. The auditors also saw evidence within case files of follow-up and further review where individuals were unhappy with the outcome or the response of the diocese.
- 2.8.14 Both *Participants* and partner agency spoke on the need to standardise procedures in terms of referral processes, recording and note taking and on that it might be helpful to seek external supervision for key roles. Safeguarding is dynamic and continues to develop in response to legislations, policies and practice.

Analysis

- 2.8.15 Overall, the auditors considered the response within the case files to allegations or concerns of abuse was good and proactive. In two or three cases, additional activity had been undertaken as well as ensuring that the procedures and expectations set out within *IGlv2* were met. There was a strong commitment not only in meeting the requirements of *IGlv2*, but also to '*do the right thing*' for individuals concerned; for example, in some cases, where there was insufficient evidence to bring charges or undertake a police investigation, the diocese agreed not to return a Priest to ministry and to continue to seek laicisation. Some priests had not been allowed to return to ministry despite their suspension being spent due to the significance of their original

behaviours resulting in the suspension.

- 2.8.16 There are clear processes in place in responding to concerns and allegations following the guidance set out within *In God's Image v2*. All are confident on what information needs to be shared and with whom. The response at diocesan level to individuals who come forward is sensitive and there is awareness of the need for individuals to be informed about the context in which they are making disclosures and for the need for their consent to share their information. There was less confidence about how consistent this might be across parishes and more work is needed around the training and support which should be offered to individuals coming forward, parish priests and parish safeguarding coordinators.
- 2.8.17 In other dioceses, some *Participants* and *Contributors* have raised concerns about how the process of reporting to Police Scotland is managed with survivors in relation to non-recent abuse and where there is no immediate risk to children or vulnerable adults. Adult survivors often need time to reflect on the issues they have raised and to speak with family and friends. There is concern that reporting non-recent abuse where an abuser has died, there appears no risk and the individual does not wish to report the abuse may cause unnecessary and additional trauma for individuals. The Church's commitment to mandatory reporting is understandable. How it continues to be developed in practice is an important issue that needs further consideration by the Bishops' Conference of Scotland.

Questions for the Diocese to consider

- What is required on an individual case basis to support parish priests in supporting others? How can the individual knowledge of parish priests be linked to the management of allegations in a way that assists those who are vulnerable?
- Who would need to be part of discussions about how the Diocese can best respect the wishes of adults who come forward to disclose abuse, including those who do not give consent to share, in the context of the Church's mandatory reporting?

RISK ASSESSMENTS AND SAFEGUARDING AGREEMENTS

Introduction

- 2.8.18 *In God's Image v2* states that: '*When a high risk offender expresses a wish to participate in one or more religious services in a parish, an assessment of potential risk of harm must be made by the statutory authorities. Police Scotland has agreed an Information Sharing Protocol which is governed by the system known as the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). The police service, prison service, health service, local authorities, and others are statutorily obliged to operate on a multiagency basis, with the objective of protecting the public from the risks that may be posed by Serious Criminal Offenders, including sex offenders.*
- 2.8.19 It further specifies that when a high risk offender wishes to attend a service in a Catholic Church, the relevant personnel from Offender Management or Criminal

Justice should contact the DSA (or religious equivalent) to discuss if it is possible to create a safe context for the individual to worship in a church following the implementation of a Safe Worship Plan. For those not subject to formal statutory supervision through MAPPA, but where there are concerns, restrictions or allegations that indicate a possible risk of harm, the DRAMT in liaison with the DSA, parish priest (PP) and PSC will develop and agree with the respondent the terms and conditions of the required Safe Worship Plan, including a review timetable and an agreement term. Plans should be reviewed within six months.

- 2.8.20 IGlV2 has also expanded on the role of the support priest to the role of support person when a priest or religious is asked to respond to an allegation of abuse. As IGlV2 states at 5.3.1: *Pending an investigation, the bishop/major religious superior must offer the support of a priest, religious or layperson who will monitor the conduct and welfare of the respondent through what will be a difficult process. The appointment of this support person must be made in discussion with the respondent and following advice from the DRAMT (or religious equivalent). The respondent is NOT obliged to accept the offer of a support person.*
- 2.8.21 It continues at 5.3.2: *The person appointed to the role of Support Person should be reliable, trustworthy, discreet, honest and wise. She/he should possess good pastoral qualities and be able to respond to others with empathy, but must also be able to observe firm boundaries in interactions with others. She/he should understand how to identify risk-taking behaviours.* Sections 5.3.3 and 5.3.4 then set out what is within the remit and role of the support person and, importantly, what is not.

Description

- 2.8.22 Consistent risk assessments have been developed in terms of children's catechism, children's liturgy and taking Communion to the sick or housebound. Guidance on the use of church premises has also been developed. Within the timescale of the audit and including the extended timescale, there were no cases to audit in relation to the management of registered sex offender or the risk assessment and management of those involved in the life of the diocese who require a welfare monitoring plan.
- 2.8.23 Within IGlV2, the provision of support has changed from the support priest to a support person and Argyll and the Isles has yet to establish links with their identified support person in this capacity, who is awaiting training, and has been identified in agreement with the National Office as having the skills and understanding needed to work with perpetrators and risk. There has also been some development work undertaken by the DSA national group in working with perpetrators.

Analysis

- 2.8.24 While there have been no cases, the area of risk assessments and managing safeguarding agreements is one which should be given consideration by the diocese in two ways. First, it would be helpful for the diocese to set out its approach to risk assessment even if this is undertaken by external professionals. Second, it would be useful to consider a range of case scenarios in terms of the management of safeguarding agreements including the management of safe worship plans and welfare monitoring plans. It would be particularly helpful to test out situations where a priest subject to a welfare monitoring plan is not adhering to the restrictions.
- 2.8.25 Finally, it is timely to begin thinking about the development of a pool of support persons; in terms of what skills and experience is required; where support persons are located across the diocese; what support is offered to individuals in that role

before during, and after supporting respondents; and how can developments locally align with potential developments nationally by the Church or the new agency.

Questions for the Diocese to consider

- How can the diocese increase the confidence in the management of those who pose a risk of harm?
- What is needed to ensure high quality support, including challenge when required, for those who have an allegation made against them?
- What is needed to begin to identify support persons and what should be in place to support these individuals?

2.9 SUPPORTING SURVIVORS

Introduction

2.9.1 Standard 4 of In God's Image v2 states:

We acknowledge, with "sorrow and shame"⁴⁸, that the Catholic Church's past response to those disclosing abuse was often characterised by denial and rejection. Those who wished to disclose experiences of abuse were often ignored at first and later marginalised. In recognising these past failures, the Church has committed to responding more compassionately and effectively to those who wish to disclose the pain of their experience.

(Bishops' conference of Scotland 2021, p.45)

2.9.2 IGIv2 continues that:

'..the Church must now show that:

- *We are prepared to listen and to give credence to survivors.*
- *We wish to help survivors to feel welcome and trusted.*
- *Our first response is to ask survivors: "What do you need us to do for you?"*
- *We are committed to help survivors to re-build their lives.*

(Bishops' conference of Scotland 2021, p.45)

2.9.3 An important part of the audit was to seek the views of survivors, as well as those working in the Diocese.

Description

2.9.4 During the time period covered of the audit, several individuals had come forward to the diocese to raise concerns. Individuals were offered opportunities to speak with the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA) or with the Bishop as well as offered counselling. The Bishop often maintains contact with individuals. Support is offered predominantly through ten sessions of counselling provided by the Raphael counselling service, although auditors heard from the Bishop and some *Participants* that the preference would be to offer a wider range of counselling. There was a clear

understanding by all, including the Bishop, of the impact of living with trauma no matter when the abuse or incident took place.

- 2.9.5 One key action from the safeguarding action plan was to develop and publish a public apology by the Bishop. This is supported by the range of information available on the diocesan website. Under the tab of *Safeguarding*, the website hosts a range of information including advice and contact details for those wishing to raise concerns or seek support, a statement from Pope Francis, statement from the diocese, discussion about what the term survivor might mean, discussion about the importance for individuals to be heard, believed, feel safe, understand and be supported and accompanied. There are also several links to prayers which individuals might find helpful.
- 2.9.6 The self-evaluation aspect to the audit and conversations with *Participants* highlighted that one of the biggest challenges is about creating a safe culture; reaching out to individuals across all communities and building a safe environment which they can trust is the challenge.
- 2.9.7 Auditors heard from the few *Contributors* about the inconsistency in response and ongoing support from parish priests. Some had been very supportive initially, but as the process had continued some felt the parish priest had withdrawn. The variable response by parish priests is a message from all areas where the auditors spoke with *Contributors*. As one individual suggested: *it might be helpful if the priest could ask the individual what do you want me to do and what do you need. These are the two key questions.*
- 2.9.8 Another issue raised by both *Contributors* and the partner agency is that the counselling offered through Health in Mind could be seen as chosen by the Church and may not be suitable for that individual. Those experiencing or who have experienced trauma often need different levels and types of support.
- 2.9.9 This is also highly relevant in relation to reflections by *Contributors* that individuals often experience spiritual, psychological and emotional abuse and it was felt more difficult to seek help or redress in relation to this harm and abuse. The current national safeguarding process is felt to place the emphasis on the individual to come forward and to approach their own diocese. These are both important points as this places the emphasis on the individual and to approach the diocese in which the abuse took place or local diocese, which may be the last place the individual wishes to approach. It is also important to recognise that those affected by abuse are likely to be in all areas of life including the clergy compounding the difficulties of approaching their own diocese.
- 2.9.10 Similar to previous audits, *Contributors* also spoke of the need for a public apology from the Catholic Church in Scotland for the hurt and damage caused over several decades stated that the church needs to move from a defensive stance to being open to challenge.

Analysis

- 2.9.11 The diocese continues to work with survivors who come forward regardless of the timeframe. Offers of support and take-up of the Raphael Counselling Service were evident in casefiles and conversations. The auditors are confident that individuals who come forward are offered a timely and compassionate response from the diocese. Nevertheless, the auditors were mindful of the reflections of *Contributors* in terms of the process which currently places emphasis on the individual to come forward, that the approach within parishes is much less consistent and that a greater understanding is needed across the church in terms of living with harm and trauma of emotional,

psychological, spiritual as well as sexual abuse.

- 2.9.12 Responding to survivors is, therefore, is one area that the auditors identify as needing further development in this diocese. As heard elsewhere, this needs to be taken forward operationally and strategically by individual dioceses and nationally through the Bishop's Conference of Scotland as some of the issues are broader than one diocese.
- 2.9.13 For those who come forward, it might be helpful to think through with them what form and level of support is suitable. For some individuals, this might be access to counselling services with a range of services offered broader than Health in Mind as one approach to counselling does not necessarily suit the needs of all. For others, this could be support in getting access into employment, training and educational opportunities, for example.
- 2.9.14 Both *Contributors* and *Participants* reflected on the need to support all including parish priests in terms of how they respond and listen to survivors, working with trauma, understanding that disclosing abuse is a process and that they are not working with the individual alone are all important points to reinforce. The inconsistent response from parish priests is an important point and highlights the need for training and support offered to parish priests throughout to help them better support an individual who may be hurting. Support to priests could include offering a confidential space to share concerns and anxieties or to offer spiritual direction.
- 2.9.15 The auditors welcomed the reflection from *Participants* about the need to reach out, to be more proactive in encouraging individuals to come forward and to help those who wish to come forward feel comfortable and fully supported in doing so. Ideas and suggestions for a more proactive approach could be to involve those with experience of accessing the Church to identify how best to reach out and what support would be helpful. It might also be helpful to link with the developments of the new agency, which it is understood, is setting up a survivor's panel.
- 2.9.16 An important message from *Contributors* is that the language, approach and support offered by the Church should widen from what appears to be a focus on sexual harm in abuse to acknowledgement of the psychological, emotional and spiritual abuse which is experienced.

Questions for the Diocese to consider

- How might the Diocese, perhaps through theological leadership and dissemination of this through the deaneries and parishes, more proactively reach out to survivors who have not yet come forward as well as those who continue to suffer?
- How can the Diocese include survivors who do not wish to have contact with the Church?
- How might the Diocese support the need for survivors to speak to and support each other?
- How can the Diocese ensure a consistent approach in support for survivors from parish priests across the diocese?

2.10 SAFE RECRUITMENT OF CLERGY, LAY OFFICERS AND VOLUNTEERS

Introduction

- 2.10.1 The mandatory Safe Recruitment process in the Catholic Church in Scotland is central to ensuring that everyone, including volunteers, is safe to work with children and vulnerable adults. IGIv2 specifies the DSAG as having an operational function around the organisation of PVG applications and monitoring of ongoing membership of the scheme across the dioceses.
- 2.10.2 Standard 2 of IGIv2 states at 2.1: *We require all Church personnel and volunteers to be safely recruited to their roles, following the relevant statutory and Church requirements (2021 p15) and continues at 2.1.1:*

Our mandatory safe recruitment process is central to ensuring that everyone – when working in, or training for, ministry as an ordained or religious, or working as a Church employee or volunteer – has passed through appropriate checks and assessments of their suitability to work with children or vulnerable adults.

(Bishops' Conference of Scotland 2021, p.24)

Description

- 2.10.3 Safer recruitment processes including the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVGs) scheme is managed by the Safeguarding Secretary in Argyll and the Isles. The Safeguarding Secretary also maintains a spreadsheet which records the status of all PVG applications including completion of application forms, receipt of the necessary references and completion of training.
- 2.10.4 Once all these elements are completed, a letter confirming the individual is able to volunteer is sent with a standard conduct card setting out the diocese expectations of their conduct. The Safeguarding Secretary was clear about which volunteers have yet to complete their training. There was confidence that Parish Priests and PSCs are aware that volunteers cannot be employed in regulated activity until they are issued with their approval letter.
- 2.10.5 It was noted from the documentary evidence that the diocese has made decisions in relation to blemished PVGs. In early 2020, the diocese sought advice from the former Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service and from another diocese about blemished PVGs. It was agreed that in Argyll and the Isles, all blemished PVGs would be discussed by the DRAMT. If DRAMT recommended that no restrictions would apply then the local parish would not be informed, however, if the recommendation was that the person be withheld or restricted in a particular role then the Parish Priest would to be informed.
- 2.10.6 Safe recruitment records including PVGs are recorded and held on the diocesan recruitment database similar with that used in other diocese and archdiocese across Scotland. The database can be interrogated to extract data in a number of ways and is also used to record training.

Analysis

- 2.10.7 The auditors saw evidence that policies within *In God's Image v2* for safer recruitment are being applied and are confident in their management. All new staff and volunteers do not start in post until all elements of the application process have been completed.

The improvements in the organisation of systems and improved recording of systems put in place by the previous Safeguarding Secretary continue with the current postholder.

- 2.10.8 Recruitment and the management of PVGs is discussed at DSAG which takes strategic oversight for the system including the responsibility of DRAMT to look at any concerns raised or blemishes. The discussions with the national agency and building on experience of another diocese was also welcomed and it felt the process put in place was appropriate. It is suggested that this process is formalised as part of the protocols for the DRAMT so all are clear about the process and there is written criteria in relation to blemishes should someone challenge decisions to bar them from volunteering.

Questions for the Diocese to consider

- How might the process for blemished PVGs be more formally incorporated into the DRAMT process?

2.11 TRAINING

Introduction

- 2.11.1 *In God's Image v2* states that mandatory safeguarding training is required by the Church to enable those involved in working with children and vulnerable adults to be well equipped to understand, manage, and reduce risk and to create safe environments. There is a basic level of expertise that all involved in this work must acquire within agreed timeframes to deepen expertise, skills and knowledge specific to roles. This training must be provided within a framework of nationally agreed safeguarding training established by the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency.
- 2.11.2 Safeguarding Induction Training Part 1 must be completed by all who will be working in a regulated role prior to assuming any role in the Church involving children or vulnerable adults and applies to seminary applicants, those accepted for the propaedeutic period, and those entering any formation programme provided by religious institutes. Within 18 months, each person must also complete Safeguarding Induction Training Part 2. Further training opportunities should be offered to clergy, religious, Church employees, and volunteers in the context of support or update meetings, courses and conferences. These training opportunities should be shaped in response to needs identified through the processes of evaluation and audit.
- 2.11.3 In addition to the training provided locally, *IGlv2* also sets out that a Safeguarding Training Advisory Group will be established by the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency in collaboration with key stakeholders. This group will be expected to support the development of a framework of nationally agreed safeguarding training to meet specific training needs identified by various groups – bishops, clergy,

religious, employees, and volunteers.

Description

- 2.11.4 The Diocese of Argyll and the Isles has grown its team of trainers to ten and the training programme is overseen by a member of Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Group (DSAG) who provides an update and report on training to DSAG quarterly meetings. There is also an annual appraisal of trainers which is informed by the evaluation forms gathered following each training event.
- 2.11.5 During the pandemic, virtual training had been offered to volunteers, parish priests and PSCs. A few, however, could not access virtual training or preferred face-to-face training. For these individuals, their application to volunteer has been suspended until face-to-face training is completed. The DSAG is to set a deadline by which all training must be completed either virtually or face-to-face. Any individuals who have not completed their training by this time will not be allowed to volunteer.
- 2.11.6 From discussions with *Participants*, training emerged as an area that needs reinvigorating. There was a need to provide training to allow volunteers to complete their application process and some reflected that it might be helpful to offer refresher training as there has been little need for volunteers since March 2020 although 100% (n=26) of survey respondents reported that training on safeguarding was good.
- 2.11.7 For the future, the diocese will continue to offer a blended approach to training as it allows a wider engagement of individuals from remote and rural areas, and the islands. The recent development day for parish priests and parish safeguarding coordinators had been well attended and well received.

Analysis

- 2.11.8 It is understandable that the training deadline for some volunteers has been extended to allow them to complete the training face-to-face. The auditors welcomed, however, that those volunteers are not currently active in the parish until this training has been completed and that the DSAG will also set a timescale for when this would be completed which will help avoid drift. Where initial training is offered and not taken up, trainers and parishes notify the DSA. There also appear to be good and regular communication with the parish safeguarding coordinators to ensure that those who had not completed the application process, were not allowed to volunteer locally.
- 2.11.9 Previously, the diocese has undertaken a training needs analysis of parish priests and this is also identified within the diocesan audit for the Bishops' Conference of Scotland. The auditors reflected that it might be timely to undertake another training needs analysis and to also include the parish safeguarding coordinators.

Questions for the Diocese to consider

- What are the barriers to a clear oversight of training for volunteers and how might the DSAG improve strategic oversight of this to minimise risk?
- How can the Diocese ensure the successful roll out Part 2 safeguarding training and refresher training and begin thinking about additional training needs?

2.12 HOW THE DIOCESE PROVIDES SAFEGUARDING SUPPORT TO PARISHES

Generic introduction

2.12.1 In a centralised diocesan structure of safeguarding, support from the Diocese to parishes is key to safe and reliable safeguarding. Diocesan safeguarding is, in significant ways, only as good as its weakest parish.

Description

2.12.2 The Bishop and Safeguarding Leadership Team works hard to provide safeguarding support for local parishes.

2.12.3 One recent development is the new handbook for PSCs. The Safeguarding Secretary supported by the SLT and former Safeguarding Secretary have produced guidance which details the role and responsibilities of a PSC, offers sample forms for Safe Recruitment and guidance on how to fill them out correctly, guidance on visiting clergy and an information leaflet for survivors.

2.12.4 It was recognised that within a wide and often sparsely populated region in Scotland that having a comprehensive set of instructions would be helpful in driving consistency and providing written material if tasks are not being carried out on a regular basis.

2.12.5 The auditors heard that communication and support from the diocese for parishes is excellent. From those who participated in the survey (n=26), 96% reported that safeguarding support from the diocesan office was good and 92% reported that communication between the diocesan office and the parish was good. There were no PSC vacancies.

Analysis

2.12.6 The regular communication from the Bishop and safeguarding team, the production of the excellent handbook setting out all a PSC needs to know for the role and an open approach promoted by the diocese would suggest that those involved in safeguarding within parishes feel very supported. This is confirmed by the survey results.

Questions for the Diocese to consider:

- There were no questions for the Diocese to consider.

2.13 QUALITY ASSURANCE

Introduction

2.13.1 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.

2.13.2 There are a range of mechanisms that can support this:

- Professional supervision of the DSA (see DSA section)
- Scrutiny by the DSAG (see DSAG section)
- Routine benchmarking the Diocese against other Dioceses within and out with Scotland
- Identifying lessons learnt from other dioceses and feeding these into planning the work of the Diocese
- Abuse survivor 'customer' feedback
- Routine PSC 'customer' feedback
- Complaints procedure about the safeguarding service (see Complaints section)
- Independent 'lessons learnt' reviews of cases where things seem to have gone wrong or there are concerns that they have

2.13.3 Standard 8 of *IG/v2* sets out an expectation that each diocese will oversee effective planning processes to monitor, review, self-evaluate and report on local safeguarding practices. The Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency will be tasked with arranging for independent reviews of the compliance of all jurisdictions with safeguarding standards.

Description

2.13.4 The diocese has set out and formalised its reporting and governance structures between the safeguarding leadership team, diocesan safeguarding advisory group and trustees as set out in its structural chart. The chart identifies that the trustees have ultimate responsibility and oversight of safeguarding matters and reporting mechanisms have recently been strengthened; for example, the safeguarding leadership team, which has been in place for more than four years, is now accountable to the diocesan safeguarding advisory group. There has also been recognition in the past two years that the diocesan safeguarding advisory group membership needed strengthening to ensure that it had the necessary skills in terms of both safeguarding practice and its governance.

2.13.5 The Bishops' Conference of Scotland requests that parishes in each diocese and archdiocese complete the annual safeguarding audit. All parishes in the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles have completed the audits for several years. Themes or concerns are fed back to the diocese and discussed by the DSAG, and then form part of the Safeguarding Action Plan if required. Information from the DSAG is shared with Parish Priests and PSC to provide a quality assurance loop.

2.13.6 There is recognition by both clergy and laity of the need to improve the diocese understanding of what activity is effective in relation to safeguarding. The audits are seen as key to this, but not the whole story. Recently the diocese has identified 14 key performance indicators against which data will be collected to begin to measure the impact of safeguarding procedures locally. The indicators are laid out in paragraph 2.1.20 above.

2.13.7 The governance arrangements clearly set out that the Trustees are accountable for all matters in relation to safeguarding.

Analysis

2.13.8 The quality assurance framework is evident within the diocese The draft safeguarding

manual is excellent and needs to be signed off as soon as possible as it clearly locates local policies and procedures within the diocese governance structures. It is also suggested that this manual is shared at least with the deaneries as it sets out clearly the structure and approach to safeguarding by the diocese.

2.13.1 It is also excellent that quality assurance within the diocese will be informed by parish audits and the newly identified key performance indicators. It is suggested that as this work progresses, thought should be given to identifying a range of indicators which address quality outcomes as well as the process outputs. This could include regular casefile audits, inclusion of survivor feedback and collation of regular feedback from PSCs.

2.13.2 It is also suggested that the role of the safeguarding leadership team is reflected within the safeguarding personnel structure chart. It is clear in practice, but it would also be helpful to formalise this within the chart.

Questions for the Diocese to consider

- How might the views and perspectives of survivors be sought and incorporated into quality assurance?
- How satisfied is the Diocese that the current model of Parish audits elicits the most effective return of information?

2.14 CULTURE

Introduction

2.14.1 The most critical aspect of safeguarding relates to the culture within any organisation. In a diocesan 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. Any diocese should strive for an open, learning culture where safeguarding is 'everybody's business' and 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.

2.14.2 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 in order that they can be addressed.

2.14.3 Culture within a diocese is crucial to effective safeguarding as is the priority given to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults over the protection of the reputation of the Church. A safe culture also relies on the knowledge and understanding of all within the diocese to react to allegations and disclosures of abuse even when these might be about those they know and admire. Crucially, a safe culture requires trust in the organisation's leadership and in fair and transparent systems and processes.

Description

2.14.4 The safeguarding culture of Argyll and the Isles is led by the Bishop both theologically

and strategically. Most reflected that there has been a significant shift in how safeguarding is viewed. Previously, it was seen as a process set up in recognition that the Catholic Church's past response to those disclosing abuse was often characterised by denial and rejection (Bishops' Conference of Scotland 2021) whereas it is now characterised with more positive developments in promoting a safe culture within the church.

- 2.14.5 The widening of membership on key structures such as the DSAG and DRAMT to include members from outwith the Catholic faith, from all parts of the diocese and with professional experience in the practice and governance of safeguarding are welcome developments. Equally welcome is the recognition of the diocese strengths and, importantly, the areas which need further development.
- 2.14.6 Regular communication alongside the approachability of the Bishop and the safeguarding leadership team helps to promote and increase understanding and confidence locally in the practice of safeguarding. This combined with a clear message that there will be no cover-up of abusive behaviours by clergy or laity helps to develop and promote a culture of care. At an operational level, safeguarding forms a regular part of discussion with all parish priests and parish safeguarding coordinators to continue to promote the message that the diocese cannot be complacent in matters of safeguarding.
- 2.14.7 During the past six years, the diocese undertook its own evaluation of the status of the safeguarding culture and administration within the diocese. The evaluation was collaborative and involved safeguarding colleagues as well as clergy and parishioners demonstrating an openness in terms of consultation and discussion. As a result, steps were taken to ensure better adherence to the necessary standards required of awareness and safety and more specifically of *In God's Image*.

Analysis

- 2.14.8 All the factors described above come together to help develop a culture which is open, approachable, takes action, is responsible and reflective. *In God's Image* is embedded in all areas of safeguarding in the diocese. The Bishop's leadership has set the tone and the openness for challenge, seeking advice and developing self-audit and scrutiny are the building blocks of improving confidence within the diocese and also demonstrating a genuine commitment to change.
- 2.14.9 Not everything is working perfectly, individuals may not always be happy with the response from the diocese, there are areas that require further development and it is likely that there are more individuals living in the diocese that may come forward to report harm and abuse. There appears, however, a genuine commitment within the diocese that people will be listened to and supported, and a clear commitment to learning from others and to improvement.

Questions for the Diocese to consider

- How might the Diocese identify areas where safeguarding culture is less well embedded and spread good practice where it is?
- How can progress in the development of culture form part of Diocesan strategic planning and be quality assured - how will the Diocese be confident that things are improving?
- In what ways could survivors of abuse be invited to support the development of safeguarding culture?



3 Conclusion

- 3.1.1 The Bishop and Safeguarding Leadership Team working with the DSAG and DRAMT provide strong leadership for safeguarding in Argyll and the Isles. There is strong commitment from both clergy and laity of the need to do the right thing and that the experiences of individuals who have been hurt and harmed are central in decision-making and support offered to all involved.
- 3.1.2 Practically, the Safeguarding Manual and DRAMT procedures need finalised and published with some thought on the checks and balances which need to be in place to ensure decisions about individuals are appropriate and ethical, and that there are published routes for complaints and escalation. This may involve closer links with the new national agency as it develops.
- 3.1.3 There are also clear areas for development such as continuing with the development of a culture of safe care, thinking about how to reach out to all people across all communities in Argyll and the Isles and how the views and experiences of individuals who have reported allegations or approached the Church for support can help shape developments moving forward.
- 3.1.4 The Safeguarding Action Plan is comprehensive and combined with the draft strategic safeguarding plan will provide a clear strategy for the diocese moving forward. The governance structures and draft quality assurance framework in terms of the key practice indicators is a strong basis to begin to measure progress and performance. The next stage is for this to also include means of quality assurance as well as process or outputs.
- 3.1.5 There is a strong commitment to safeguarding in Argyll and Isles and, more importantly, a recognition that approaches by the Church in the past cannot continue today. There is a willingness to engage, seek advice and change. There may be practice that could be improved both historically and more recently, but the acknowledgement of the need for ongoing audit and evaluation will help ensure that the diocese continues to learn and improve; all key elements of an effective learning culture.

4 APPENDICES

4.1 APPENDIX: REVIEW PROCESS

DATA COLLECTION

Information provided to auditors

In advance of and during the site visit, the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles provided auditors with the following:

- A self-assessment of Safeguarding
- DSAG minutes
- DRAMT minutes
- Safeguarding Action Plan
- Parish Risk Assessment
- Policy and Procedures relating to safeguarding
- Checklist for Responding to Allegations
- Diocesan context and local safeguarding structure and arrangements
- PVG database information
- Safe recruitment procedures and PVG templates
- Parish Risk Assessment for Activities and Places guidance
- Parish Risk Register template
- Safeguarding Complaints Policy
- Diocesan Safeguarding Audit 2018-2022
- DSAG Roles and responsibilities
- Diocesan Whistleblowing Policy
- Safeguarding Manual (draft)
- Guidance for Parish Safeguarding Officers

Participation of members of the Diocese

Between the 26th and 28th April, the auditors conducted an onsite visit to the Diocese and had conversations with:

- The Bishop of Argyll and the Isles
- The Vicar General
- The DSA
- The Diocesan Chancellor
- One member of the DRAMT
- Two members of DSAG
- Representatives from the parishes (via the survey)
- A number of *Contributors*

The audit: records / files

Auditors looked at:

- A number of randomly selected case files
- Examples of enquiries handled within the Diocese from 2016

LIMITATIONS OF AUDIT

It is possible that some survivors of abuse who have no further contact with the Church and who have not approached survivor support organisations would not have been made aware of the audit. We also recognise that those with strongly negative or positive views are more likely to come forward than those with broadly neutral views.

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