

# CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS AGENCY

## Executive Summary of the Diocese of Shrewsbury Baseline Audit Report June 2024



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## 1. Introduction

**1.1** This is an executive summary of the baseline safeguarding audit report for the Diocese of Shrewsbury. The audit was undertaken between March and April 2024, in accordance with the contractual agreement between the diocese and the CSSA. Trustees of the diocesan charity have been provided with a full version of this report.

**1.2** The audit is based on information drawn from a number of sources, including:

- A self-assessment and supporting evidence provided by the diocese of Shrewsbury;
- Case audits of individual safeguarding cases and lower-level concerns;
- Individual and small-group interviews with key diocesan personnel;
- Online surveys of clergy and Parish Safeguarding Representatives (PSR); and
- Focus groups with clergy and PSRs

**1.3** The Diocese of Shrewsbury serves parts of Merseyside, southern parts of Greater Manchester, parts of Derbyshire, counties of New Cheshire and the whole of Shropshire. Most of the Catholic population is concentrated in the urban and sub-urban areas, in the north of the diocese. As of 2021, the diocese serves over 170,000 Catholics across 89 parishes, over 2,369 square miles.

**1.4** The safeguarding team and other diocesan departments are based at the Curial Offices in Prenton, Wirral and consists of a full-time Safeguarding Coordinator and two part-time Safeguarding Administrators. The Curial Offices are based some distance from Shrewsbury Cathedral, reflecting where a greater number of the diocese's Catholic population and members of the curia reside.

**1.5** For the purpose of transparency it is noted that the Diocese of Shrewsbury's Financial Secretary was a Director of CSSA until December 2023. She had no operational knowledge or involvement in this audit as a consequence of this role.

## 2. Audit Grading

2.1 Practice was assessed against the eight safeguarding standards adopted by the Catholic Church in England and Wales<sup>1</sup>, and graded in accordance with the CSSA Maturity Matrix for dioceses<sup>2</sup>. Each standard is graded on an ascending seven-point scale of Below Basic, Basic, Early Progress, Firm Progress, Results Being Achieved, Comprehensive Assurance, and Exemplary. Grades for individual standards are combined to produce an overall grading.

<b>OVERALL GRADING</b>	<b>Results Being Achieved</b>
Standard 1 - Safeguarding is embedded in the Church body's leadership, governance, ministry and culture	Comprehensive Assurance
Standard 2 - Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message	Comprehensive Assurance
Standard 3 - Engaging with and Caring for those who report having been harmed	Results Being Achieved
Standard 4 - Effective Management of Allegations and Concerns	Results Being Achieved
Standard 5 - Management and Support of Subjects of Allegations and Concerns (respondents)	Results Being Achieved
Standard 6 - Robust Human Resource Management	Comprehensive Assurance

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<sup>1</sup> Full details of the eight standards and underpinning sub standards are available here: [The Eight National Safeguarding Standards \(catholicsafeguarding.org.uk\)](https://www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk)

<sup>2</sup> More full information about the audit process, including the Maturity Matrix, is available here: [Our Quality Assurance Framework \(catholicsafeguarding.org.uk\)](https://www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk)

Standard 7 - Training and Support for Safeguarding	Results Being Achieved
Standard 8 - Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement	Firm Progress

### 3. Summary of overall findings

**3.1** Auditors found evidence of good progress being made across all eight safeguarding standards. The Diocese of Shrewsbury have achieved an overall grade of Results Being Achieved, with particular strengths being around the leadership and governance; how safeguarding messages are communicated and human resource processes. The standard not quite reaching Results Being Achieved was in relation to quality assurance processes, however, progress was being made in this area.

**3.2** There is a clear culture across the Diocese of Shrewsbury, where safeguarding is seen as everyone's responsibility, as is championed by the Bishop and other senior leaders. Governance arrangements are effective in reviewing the delivery of the safeguarding standards, as Trustees and members of the Safeguarding Sub-Committee<sup>3</sup> are clear on what their responsibilities entail. The diocese have demonstrated a commitment to ensuring adequate resources are in place to deliver safeguarding services at every level. There is good engagement with those who report harm; they are suitably supported and their views are sought and used to inform policy. There is some learning from safeguarding cases taking place, yet further improvements can be made by developing procedures that set out how such learning

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<sup>3</sup> The Safeguarding Sub-Committee is made up of trustees and other lay people with safeguarding experience to whom the trustees delegate oversight of safeguarding to.

can routinely be captured and disseminated widely, to inform further safeguarding practice across the diocese.

**3.3** A Communication Plan has been developed to describe how the diocese will communicate safeguarding messages by promoting engagement, confidence, transparency, collaborative working and listening to the voice of survivors. The plan is being delivered by all those with responsibilities for communicating safeguarding messages, e.g. trustees, safeguarding team, clergy, PSRs. A range of methods are being used consistently across the diocese to communicate key safeguarding messages and are effective in promoting engagement with those who report harm. The diocesan website is used to communicate safeguarding information, to those who provide safeguarding services and to those who may wish to come forward to report harm. This area of work will be further enhanced by seeking the views of key stakeholders to establish the effectiveness of safeguarding messages and identifying any further improvements that can be made.

**3.4** Policies and procedures are in place for anyone within the diocese who is likely to receive a disclosure and were seen to be used in case work practice. Some good practice was identified, specifically around the timeliness of allegations or concerns being responded to and in person-centred practice, where support services are tailored to meet individual needs. Case audits additionally provided evidence of a supportive response to victim-survivors. The views of victim-survivors are sought and were used to inform the newly created '*Victim and Survivor Commitment*' that describes exactly can be expected from the diocese, by anyone coming forward to report harm. Key events such as Safeguarding Sunday and LoudFence<sup>4</sup> demonstrate the diocese's

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<sup>4</sup> LoudFence is an event involving tying bright coloured ribbons and messages of support in public spaces to show support to ALL victim-survivors of child abuse. The aim is to give survivors a voice, create awareness in the community and work to end child abuse.

commitment to engage with those who have been harmed, with plans being developed to hold LoudFence events on an annual basis.

**3.5** As part of governance arrangements, procedures are in place for reporting of safeguarding cases to the Safeguarding Sub-Committee and Risk Advisory Group (RAG)<sup>5</sup> however, one case audit identified a lack of management oversight and decision making, where it would have been expected. Senior leaders need to be assured that all appropriate cases are shared with them as a matter of course and any associated decision making be recorded in case files. The diocese should consider developing mechanisms for sampling of case files, as part of ongoing quality assurance processes. They should seek to describe how they will routinely learn from safeguarding cases (e.g. during reviews, case closures), and obtain feedback from those who receive a safeguarding service. Such learning and feedback should be used to further develop safeguarding policy and practice.

**3.6.** There are procedures in place to manage and support the subjects (respondents) of allegations and concerns, including the implementation of safeguarding plans where necessary. Reviews are held at least annually or earlier, in response to any impending changes to circumstances; in line with CSSA expectations. Decision making around the appropriateness of clergy respondents returning to ministry, (following temporary removal) is supported by suitably accredited professionals who undertake psychological assessments. Overall packages of support are provided by diocesan personnel (e.g. pastoral support, accommodation moves, facilitating attendance at appointments). Clergy welfare support officers offer practical help and signposting to services, as needs are identified. The diocese have access to canon lawyers, in the event of any canonical investigations needing to be instigated, although there are

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<sup>5</sup> The Risk Advisory Group (RAG), as created by the Safeguarding Sub-Committee, is made up of professionals from health and statutory authorities. The purpose of the RAG is to provide advice on case management.

plans to refer any new investigations to the National Tribunal Service<sup>6</sup>. To improve clergy understanding of what to expect, in the event of them being the subject of an allegation, guidance should be developed that describes the processes that will be followed and the support provided. Assurances need to be given that clergy welfare officers are provided with sufficient information around any identified risk(s), this will ensure they are suitably safeguarded when working directly with clergy respondents.

**3.7** Robust safer recruitment procedures are in place and are effective in the management of incoming clergy, including those from overseas. The newly created '*New Arrivals Safeguarding Process*' developed by the Vocations Director and Safeguarding Coordinator promotes routine information sharing across the curia and safeguarding team on clergy who are in the diocese, providing confidence that up to date records can be maintained on details of vetting checks and training. Compliance rates for DBS checks are high, as a result of considerable time and effort given to ensuring new checks and rechecks are completed swiftly. PSRs are well equipped to undertake their role, they are provided with a robust induction that includes the provision of one-to-one safeguarding training, prior to commencing the role. PSRs and members of clergy reported consistently that they feel very well supported by the Safeguarding Coordinator. Whistleblowing and Complaints Policies are promoted amongst the relevant people and are accessible via the diocesan website. Further improvements in this standard will be seen once procedures are developed that set out how any identified learning from the handling of any previous (or new) complaints will be drawn upon to support developments with policy and practice.

**3.8** Post the coronavirus pandemic, changes in demographics prompted senior leaders to prioritise safer recruitment processes and training, by way of ensuring suitable safeguarding resources are available at a parish level. This work is underpinned by

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<sup>6</sup> The National Tribunal Service of England and Wales was set up in November 2023, for the purpose of enhancing impartiality, transparency and consistency in the application of canon law across its jurisdiction in penal cases.

the Safeguarding Implementation Plan (2022-2025) that describes the expectations for the roll out of training for clergy, PSR and other volunteer roles up until 2025. Training compliance is monitored, any failures to attend training (amongst clergy members) are addressed by senior leaders, which is reported to be effective in ensuring compliance. There is a need to identify the training needs of volunteers in non-DBS roles and those who are employed in licensed premises, who are likely to come in to contact with children and vulnerable adults. The importance of training is that it will increase confidence that anyone coming forward to report harm or seek support, will be listened to and supported.

**3.9** Through the diocese's Self-Assessment and audit proceedings, it is proven that senior leaders have a strong understanding of their current compliance with the national safeguarding standards and what needs to be done to secure further improvements. The Diocese are committed to promoting transparency and accountability in how they communicate safeguarding progress, as seen in the creation of an Annual Safeguarding Report, which has been made publicly available. Further strengthening of quality assurance processes can be achieved through the formalisation of procedures, which, once developed, should be shared widely to ensure consistent safeguarding practice.

## **4. Recommendations**

**4.1** The following recommendations have been made to the Diocese of Shrewsbury, in response to the audit findings, to address general and specific areas for development:

### **4.2 Short term (within three months)**

- To establish mechanisms for the reviewing of all types of safeguarding cases, to ensure all those necessary have been brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Sub-Committee, for their oversight and decision making.

- For any case management oversight provided, to be routinely and consistently recorded on case files.
- To develop procedures for clergy welfare support officers, to support the identification of risk and development of any necessary risk assessments, prior to commencing their work with clergy respondents.
- To plan a programme of regular review of the Safeguarding Implementation Plan (SIP) to establish progress and whether changes to priorities are needed, in response to audit findings.

#### 4.3 Medium term (within six months)

- To plan reviews of safeguarding plans to ensure they involve all relevant people and include timescales and details of contingency planning.
- To develop procedures for receiving formal feedback from those who receive a safeguarding service.
- To develop procedures how learning from allegations and concerns can be reflected upon and how any learning identified will be disseminated.
- To seek the engagement of key people (children, parents/carers, clergy, volunteers) to establish the effectiveness of safeguarding messages.

#### 4.4 Longer term (within 12 months)

- To develop guidance that would be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of clergy. These should be disseminated to all members of clergy, so that they are clear on what the processes involve and what support can be expected.
- To seek training for clergy, PSRs and other support personnel, in the supervision and management of known or suspected offenders.
- A Training Needs Analysis (TNA) to be developed for all non-DBS eligible roles and employees, outside of the safeguarding team. Training to be provided, as appropriate to roles e.g. consideration of raising awareness amongst clergy on how to recognise and respond to mental health presentations.
- To develop networking opportunities for PSRs, as a way of sharing learning, experiences and good practice. Consideration should be given to extending

such invitations to senior leaders, to improve visibility amongst those who provide a safeguarding service.

- To ensure that the Communication Plan is dated and reviewed to reflect any changes necessary.

## 5. Arrangements for Follow-up

**5.1** In line with the CSSA audit pathway, as a result of achieving an overall grade of Results Being Achieved, the minimum period prior to a reaudit will be two years, (the second quarter of 2026), subject to there being no indications of increased risk. The Diocese of Shrewsbury will be invited to submit its action plan arising from this audit and six-monthly 'check-in' conversations will be held with the lead auditor to establish progress against the recommendations. A yearly self-assessment will be required.