

Safeguarding Jurisdiction

30. The Archdiocese of Westminster Safeguarding Service only undertakes safeguarding for the Benedictine Order, and other religious Orders, who are located within the Archdiocese of Westminster. In relation to SOPER there appeared to be a sense of confusion at times re. jurisdiction and responsibilities. Westminster Safeguarding Service appeared to rely on what they were told by the Benedictine.

31. Indeed, due to the constraints of Canon Law, a very real flaw appears to be that the Archdiocese of Westminster Safeguarding Service do not have any kind of actual or real authority, via the local Bishop, over the Benedictines or any other Religious Orders for whom they provide a safeguarding service.

32. A further issue is that of supervision, overview and accountability. Due to the local Diocesan arrangement to simply provide safeguarding services for the Religious Orders located in a particular Diocese it is difficult to see how the Catholic Church is able to obtain a complete safeguarding picture of any of the Religious Orders with a presence in England & Wales.

Lack of Information

33. At every turn, those CS & SR spoke to within the Catholic Church claimed not to have any current or actionable information or intelligence about SOPER. This was somewhat frustrating. CS & SR have no doubt those spoken to were telling the truth. However, it is also clear the information was there to be discovered and disclosed if there had been an appetite to do so.

34. For example, as is now known, as early as late March 2016, SOPER himself sent a letter to the Vatican bank providing them with his current address in Kosovo. During the time he was at large, SOPER had also periodically contacted the Vatican Bank asking for funds to be transferred from his Vatican Bank account to an account he had set up with a bank in Kosovo.

Financial Investigation

35. Enclosed is a copy of CS' financial investigation statement and associated exhibits based on the financial enquiries undertaken and the material examined. Much of the latter was seized from SOPER upon his arrest at Luton airport in August 2016.

36. The statement provides a great deal of financial background in relation to SOPER and his contact with the Vatican bank during the years he was at large.

MPS Internal Reflection & Learning

37. There are always lessons to be learned from any complex investigation such as this.

Manhunt Primacy

38. In hindsight the 'manhunt' for SOPER should not have been left with the original investigating Child Abuse Investigating Team (CAIT) overseen by a single investigating Officer. This task should have been passed to those with specialisms in this area of work, who have a wide range of resources at their disposal. Once this was done, in and around December 2015 and primacy was passed to an MPS Major Investigation Team (MIT), SOPER was detained in Kosovo within six months (May 2016).