

NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING STEERING GROUP

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW TO THE PAST CASES REVIEW 2019 (PCR2)

1. Background

In May 2007, the House of Bishops recognised the need for a review of past cases of child abuse. This followed court appearances by several clergy and church officers, charged with sexual offences against children. What became known as the Past Cases Review 2007-2009 (PCR) was considered necessary to ensure that:

- *Any current or future risk to children was identified*
- *Action was taken to address these concerns – e.g., referrals to the statutory authorities where necessary*
- *Where cases were identified support could be provided for the survivors of abuse where these people are known and still in contact with the Church*
- *Lessons from the past could be learned to inform the work of the Church today and in the future.*

The PCR 2007-2009 was a large-scale review of the handling by the Church of child protection cases over many years. It involved a scrutiny of clergy and church officers' files to identify persons presenting on-going risks to children but whose cases had not been acted upon appropriately. The PCR was implemented using a House of Bishops' Protocol and was carried out during 2008 and 2009 by all dioceses (44 at the time). A similar process was undertaken for the provinces in relation to information and files held at Lambeth and Bishopthorpe Palaces. *Further details about the background and the review process of the original PCR are contained in the "Note to accompany diocesan summaries" which was circulated to Diocesan and Provincial Safeguarding Advisers between October 2017 and January 2018.*

In 2015 concerns were expressed to the newly appointed National Safeguarding Adviser about how well the PCR had been conducted. Consequently, in consultation with the National Safeguarding Steering Group, he commissioned an independent assessment of the adequacy of the PCR. This was conducted by an Independent Scrutiny Team (IST) comprising Sir Roger Singleton, Amanda Lamb and Donald Findlater, all of whom had extensive safeguarding experience. They reported to the National Safeguarding Steering Group in April 2018. Following consideration by the Archbishops' Council and the House of Bishops, its full report was published and submitted to the Independent Inquiry on Child Sexual Abuse on 22 June 2018. Overall the IST found:

"... the Past Cases Review to be well motivated and thoughtfully planned given the limited resources available at the time. It led to hundreds of cases of concern being reviewed and additional actions taken where appropriate. There were some limitations in relation to its execution and the public statements which were subsequently issued. Recommendations have been made to address these shortcomings and to help the Church to build on the strong policy, procedures and training foundations which have now been laid."

2. The IST findings regarding the adequacy of the 2007-2009 PCR:

- Some files have subsequently been located which could not be found in 2008/09 and not all relevant files available in 2008/09 were reviewed in all dioceses
- The Protocol was not wholly consistent in relation to which roles were within the scope of the PCR. Moreover the Protocol did not state whether parish as distinct from diocesan employees and volunteers were to be included. In subsequent clarification the National Safeguarding Adviser at the time said that for parish employees "...we must encourage the employer to do the appropriate review". Variable practice ensued.