



Operation Coverage

Summary Report

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1.1 Background Summary of Operation Coverage

- 1.1.1 In July 2016 Cheshire Constabulary commenced a police investigation - Operation Coverage - following a report from the Chester Diocese Safeguarding Officer, which related to serious sexual abuse disclosures that had been made by two males against the late Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey.
- 1.1.2 At the start of the investigation it was alleged that the offences were contained to the locality of Chester, although through subsequent enquiries, alleged offences were also identified in the Lancashire area.
- 1.1.2 The investigation was focused on incidents reported to have occurred between 1974 and 1982, this being the period of time that Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey held the position of the Bishop of Chester.
- 1.1.3 The first known allegation is reported to have occurred sometime within 1974, the last reported allegation is reported to have occurred following the Bishop's departure from the Chester Diocese in 1982.
- 1.1.4 The investigation was initially allocated to the Chester Local Policing Unit, Criminal Investigation Department (CID) but, due to the growth of the enquiry, in March 2017, the investigation was passed to the Non-recent Sexual Abuse Team.

1.2 Purpose of Operation Coverage - Findings of the Investigation Summary Report

- 1.2.1 Due to the public prominence of the Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey, the fact that at the time of receiving the allegations he is deceased and the nature of the reports that Cheshire Constabulary has received, the publication of this Investigation Summary Report is an important aspect of concluding the enquiry. The report will allow for openness and transparency. Consideration has been given in balancing public interest, against the operational confidentiality and anonymity of the ¹witnesses and consideration to the character and reputation of the person subject of the alleged abuse.

¹ Cheshire Constabulary supports all people who report crime, and in accordance with the National Crime Recording Standards, matters are recorded as a crime, until there is evidence to indicate no crime has occurred. Cheshire Constabulary provides appropriate guidance and support to all such people in accordance with the Victim's Charter.

1.3 Role of the Police in an Investigation into a Deceased Person

1.3.1 The role of the police in an investigation into a deceased person is set out in *Operation Hydrant Senior Investigating Officer Advice (2016)*, whereby it states that the investigation should be focused on:

- Establishing the facts of the case
- Identifying offenders, whether deceased or not
- Bringing any living offenders to justice
- Preventing further harm.

The advice and guidance is also supported by *Operation Hydrant – Counsel’s Advice (2016)* into the investigation of deceased offenders. Within this guidance it specifically highlights the legal requirements of the police to investigate allegations against deceased people and the importance of a proportionate response.

1.3.2 Due to the public prominence and position of Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey at the time of the allegations of the abuse, the advice is particularly relevant in relation to the decision of the force to investigate the allegations against the Bishop.

1.3.3 The role of the police within the investigation into a deceased person is not to reach any conclusion as to the guilt or innocence of the person subject of the allegations of abuse as there is no likely prospect of criminal proceedings being taken forward. However, this report, in line with the advice from *Operation Hydrant – Advice for Investigating Deceased Persons ‘Publication of Findings (2017)*, does outline the decision that would have been taken by the police if Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey had been alive in relation to whether he would have been spoken to in order to establish his account.

1.3.4 This report will not identify the details of anyone who has made disclosures of sexual abuse during the course of the investigation and the detail contained within will be limited to ensure that there is no reference or means to identify anyone within the report. This decision is wholly supported by *Section 1 of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992* which provides complainants of sexual offences lifelong anonymity in the media in relation to the disclosures they make.

2.1 Strategic Governance and Objectives of the Investigation

2.1.1 The investigation into the allegations against Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey has been focused on the period he was in office as the Bishop of

Chester. To ensure that the investigation remained focused, the following terms of reference were adopted at the start:

- To undertake a formal investigation in relation to complaints of sexual abuse received from witnesses in respect of Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey
- To ensure that the welfare of witnesses and those who come forward as victims is paramount throughout this investigation, in accordance with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (2013) and in support of the “We’re Here for Victims” force commitment for the communities of Cheshire.
- To ensure that appropriate consideration is given for the support needs of families and those closely linked to the matters under investigation.
- To maintain the confidence of victims of child sexual abuse to come forward and report and to maintain public confidence in the policing response by Cheshire Constabulary to such allegations.

2.1.2 The following investigation aims and objectives were also considered and recorded within the SIO Policy File:

Whilst there cannot be a criminal justice outcome in respect of Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey this does not detract from the obligation for the police to conduct an investigation into alleged criminal conduct and the force is committed to conducting a thorough yet proportionate search for the truth to:

- Ensure that, as far as possible, the facts are established
- Expose culpable and discreditable conduct and bring it to public notice if in the public interest
- Dispel unjustified suspicion of deliberate wrongdoing
- Correct dangerous practices and procedures
- Safeguard and protect individuals

Although there is no need to satisfy the criminal standard of proof, the intention is to conduct this investigation in such a way that this may well be achieved and thereby satisfying the needs and wishes of the witnesses, supporting a case against identified living perpetrators should any be identified and to ensure that any conclusions drawn at the end of the investigation withstand scrutiny.

3.1 Summary of Disclosures received by Operation Coverage

- 3.1.1 In July 2016, Cheshire Constabulary was contacted by the Chester Diocese Safeguarding Advisor, who informed the police that the Church had received an email report from a male (M1) who stated that he had been sexually abused between the dates of 1974-1979 at the Bishop's House in Chester, by Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey. During this report, Cheshire Constabulary was also advised that a further male (M2) had also come forward and they wished to speak to the police about the sexual abuse they suffered. The allegations of abuse from (M2) related to abuse suffered in 1981.
- 3.1.2 After the initial reports from the Church of England, relating to M1 and M2, the Church conducted their own further internal enquiries. This was not a formal part of the police investigation however it did uncover a number of further witnesses and allegations. (M3) reported to the Church of England that he had been sexually abused by Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey in 1980-1981, a female victim (F1) was spoken to by the Chester Diocese Safeguarding Advisor, during this meeting a further 2 female witnesses making similar allegations (F2 & F3) were identified and the Church shared their concerns, reporting the details of (F2 & F3) to the police. The incidents of alleged sexual abuse relating to (F1, F2 & F3) occurred between the years of 1980 – 1982.
- 3.1.3 During the initial police investigation, enquiries were conducted with representatives from within the Church and through this action a further female witness was identified (F4). On speaking with (F4) the police identified a further female witness (F5). The disclosures from (F4) & (F5) related to allegations of sexual abuse by Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey, which occurred around 1982.
- 3.1.4 Information obtained during the investigation from witnesses from within the Church of England, led to the further identification of a further female witness (F6). Enquiries completed with (F6), led to the identification of a further male witness (M4). The disclosures of F6 and M4 alleged abuse of a sexual nature and occurred in 1979.
- 3.1.5 During the course of the investigation, a further 2 female witnesses were identified (F7 & F8), along with a further male witness (M5). All disclosures and information obtained from these witnesses were allegations of a sexual nature and occurred primarily within the premises located within the home of the Bishop of Chester.

4.1 Enquiries with the Church of England

- 4.1.1 During the police investigation, members of the Church were spoken to regarding the allegations against Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey and formal accounts obtained. Through the enquiries conducted with the Church, it is clear that those who reported abuse had previously disclosed details of their allegations to the Church. Five of the cases that Cheshire Constabulary investigated related to disclosures which were allegedly previously reported to members of the clergy.
- 4.1.2 Cheshire Constabulary has confirmed that one previous allegation had been reported to members of the clergy, confirmation regarding the earlier reporting of the four allegations was unable to be made.
- 4.1.3 It has been established that (M2) reported the abuse they alleged to representatives of the clergy the day after the alleged abuse occurred (1981) and (M2) was able to provide the police with letters they had received from the Church appertaining to the events surrounding the alleged abuse.
- 4.1.4 It has been established that (M3) reported the alleged abuse to representatives of the clergy in 1992 and between the years of 2000-2002. On both occasions, due to their wishes, no further action was taken by the Church. The disclosures have been confirmed by the witnesses from within the Church however police could find no records of the disclosures being made.
- 4.1.5 Enquiries were also conducted with the Church in terms of establishing archive material relating to the Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey - Bishop of Chester. On liaison with the Church Safeguarding Leads, it was established that no clergy file relating to Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey could be located however the police were provided with some personal data relating to Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey, in the form of the Bishop's retirement file. Throughout the enquiries conducted with the Church, there is no information that supports or undermines the disclosures made by the witnesses within this investigation.

5.1 Investigation Findings

- 5.1.1 At the conclusion of the police investigation into a deceased person the option for the police to present a case file to the CPS for consideration of charge is not available. However, the advice and guidance from *Operation Hydrant – Advice for Investigating Deceased Persons 'Publication of Findings' (2017)* does provide the police with the opportunity to conclude, if the deceased person was alive, they would have been spoken to in order to provide a response.

- 5.1.2 The information obtained during the investigation into the alleged sexual abuse by Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey, has uncovered 13 people making allegations. The accounts provided by each has been assessed and considered in terms of whether the police had sufficient information to consider if Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey would be asked to provide an account.
- 5.1.3 Based upon the accounts provided, Operation Coverage has determined that should Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey have been alive today, then the police would have spoken to him in relation to 10 of the witness allegations. This is based upon the details they have provided within their accounts of the abuse they have alleged. The 3 other witnesses have provided only limited information to the police regarding the abuse they have alleged and, as such, it has been determined that we would have had insufficient information to speak to Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey in regard to these specific cases.
- 5.1.4 The following outlines the breakdown of the allegations that Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey would have been asked to respond to:
1. Between 1974 and 1979 - Sexual assaults against M1
 2. Between 1974 and 1979 – Adult abuse of position of trust /sexual activity with a boy aged 13-17 against M1.
 3. March 1981 – Sexual assault against M2
 4. In 1981 – Sexual assault against M3
 5. In 1981 – Adult abuse of position of trust /sexual activity with a boy aged 13-17 against M3.
 6. Between 1981 and 1982 – Sexual assault against F4
 7. Between 1981 and 1982 – Sexual assault against F5
 8. Between 1979 and 1982 - Sexual assaults against F2
 9. Between 1981 and 1982 – Sexual assault against F1
 10. Between 1981 and 1982 – Sexual assault against F3
 11. In 1979 – Sexual assault against F6
 12. In 1979 – Sexual assault against M4
- 5.1.4 Where the police have concluded that they would have spoken to Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey, this is so that an account could be obtained. The account provided is an important part of the evidence gathering process and without it the evidence gathering process is not complete.
- 5.1.5 The fact that the police have made the decision that should Right Reverend Hubert Victor Whitsey have been alive today he would be ²spoken to is not an

² Any person spoken to by Cheshire Constabulary as part of a criminal investigation, where it is alleged they are the offender, would be accorded the protection and advice of the police caution, prior to making any response.

indication of guilt, as within any criminal investigation individuals are provided opportunities to give their account, whether this leads to further action or not.

- 5.1.6 Throughout the police investigation, those reporting the alleged abuse have been supported by dedicated officers and have been provided with advice and guidance to other support agencies. It is clear that the impact of the alleged abuse they have suffered has been significant and has affected their future lives. The witnesses making allegations within this enquiry are not known to each other and at the time of the alleged abuse, they were all strongly connected to the Church.
- 5.1.7 The police investigation was completed over a 13 month period. The investigation team was made up of specialist officers, this being x1 Detective Inspector; x1 Detective Sergeant, x1 Detective Constable and x1 Police Constable.