



# Annual Safeguarding Report for 2024

*This report from the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) covers the period of January 2024 – December 2024 and has been received by Bishop's Council (21/7/25) and Diocesan Synod (15/3/25).*

*Our safeguarding strategy is aligned with the 5 Safeguarding Standards set by the National Safeguarding Team: **Culture, Leadership and Capacity**, **Prevention**, **Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk**, **Victims and Survivors**, **Learning, Supervision and Support**.*

**CULTURE, LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY** – *Church bodies have safe and healthy cultures, effective leadership, resourcing and scrutiny arrangements necessary to deliver high-quality safeguarding practices and outcomes.*

*In January 2024 Salisbury was the first Diocese and Cathedral to take part in an external audit led by INEQE. The report commended the work of the Diocese and the Cathedral in much of its safeguarding practice including placing victims and survivors at the centre of its work with its trauma informed approach' being 'palpable'. They found that a culture of safeguarding was firmly embedded, aside from a few areas where there were pockets of negative culture. On the whole, parish staff and volunteers felt able to speak 'truth to power'. INEQE made 68 recommendations across the diocese and the Cathedral and our response to these is being overseen by the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) for the Diocese', and the Independent Safeguarding Advisory Group (ISAG) for the Cathedral.*

*In conclusion the auditors said 'During the audit, senior leaders demonstrated a willingness to open themselves to direct challenge and provided access to all areas and no questions were off limits. To the cynic, this may sound like rhetoric, but the real strength in Salisbury is its people. From the leadership teams to the volunteers, there was an absence of hubris, no defensiveness and a desire to learn'.*

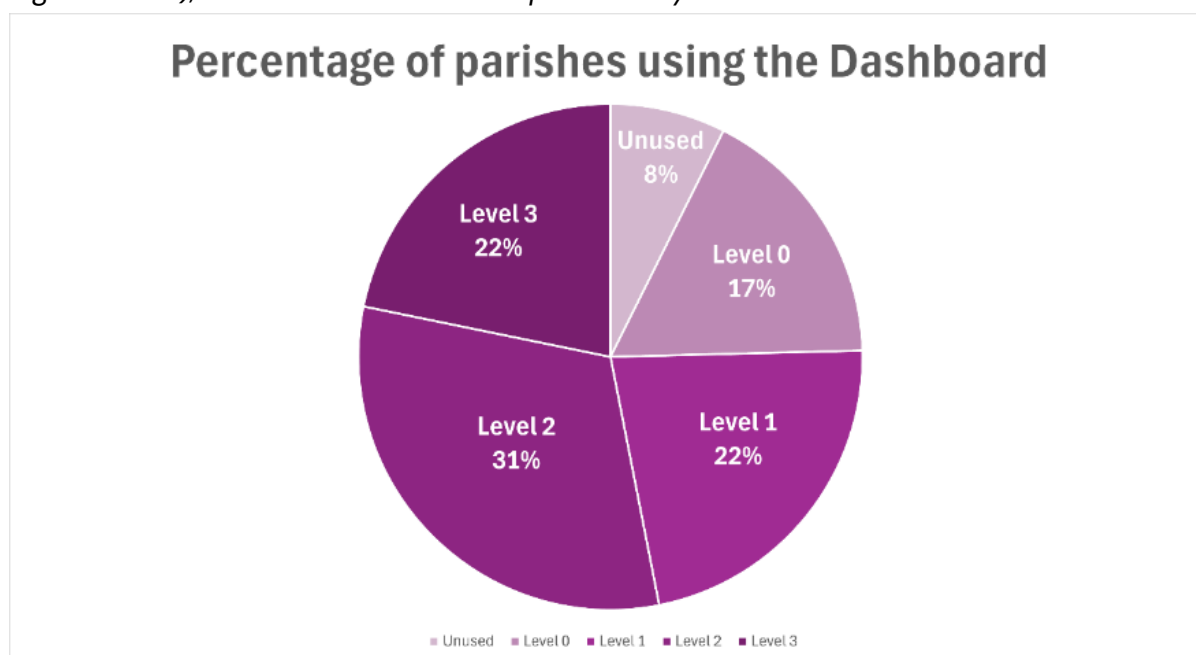
*One of the recommendations from INEQE was for a Director of Safeguarding to be part of the senior leadership team to ensure that safeguarding was considered as a priority in strategic decisions. In response to this recommendation and in light of other significant safeguarding developments the Head of Safeguarding (Suzy Fitcher) has joined the Senior Leadership Team of the Diocesan Board of Finance. There has also been an uplift in the capacity of the team to meet increasing demands, which now brings the resource of Salisbury more in line with the resources of other Diocesan Safeguarding Teams across the country.*

*During November and December, a Healthy Cultures Survey was conducted focussing on safeguarding within parishes and the Cathedral. 549 people completed the survey, and the results are being analysed and used to plan future work.*

## **PREVENTION** – Church bodies have in place a planned range of measures which together are effective in preventing abuse in their context.

Prevention (alongside 'Learning Supervision and Support'), is a key area of focus for us this year. It is acknowledged that the church has not always been a safe place in the past, and it is right that safeguarding standards are raised. Those who hold ultimate accountability for safeguarding within parishes (the incumbent and the PCC) are seeking additional assurances that safeguarding risks are being properly managed. However, as minimum expectations are raised, this also increases the demand on people within parishes who are undertaking safeguarding roles. We are seeking to provide systems and tools to help parishes to understand and act on their safeguarding responsibilities.

One of these tools is the Safeguarding Dashboard which is an online tool available to parishes to check levels of compliance with safeguarding. This time last year only 4% of parishes had reached Level 3 (the highest level), and this rose to 22% of parishes by the end of 2024.



Another tool becoming available to parishes this year is 'Safeguarding Hubs'. This helps parishes to record safeguarding training and safer recruitment and will help us move away from the 'DBS Microsite' which is not intuitive and proves problematic for many users. We are also changing our DBS provider to one used by the majority of diocese around the country as they are more effective, agile and offer a higher level of support than our current provider.

This year the safeguarding team have focussed on increasing the level of support available for those in safeguarding roles within parishes. The team have delivered Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) workshops in 11 locations across the diocese (attended by 144 PSO's) and have set up a monthly online drop-in session attended by around 40 PSO's. A highlight for many Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSO) was an invite to a PSO garden party at South Canonry in the summer.

## **2025 Prevention priorities:**

- **Improved safeguarding systems** available for safeguarding within parishes – continue the roll out of Safeguarding Dashboards, introduce Safeguarding Hubs, and change DBS provider.
- **Increased levels of DBS compliance** – Alongside changing DBS provider, to review and clarify roles.
- **Clarity of roles and responsibilities** – Ensure all church officers are aware of their responsibilities and remit within safeguarding

## **RECOGNISING, ASSESSING AND MANAGING RISK** – *Risk assessments, safety plans and associated processes are of a high quality and result in positive outcomes. The assessment and management of risk is underpinned by effective partnership.*

Here is a flavour of some of the work that the safeguarding team has been involved with this year.

- The Safeguarding Team recorded 212 new 'concerns' on the casework management system (compared to 113 during 2023). These concerns range from giving advice about best practice and prevention, to responding where someone has suffered harm.
- There were 8 new Core Groups processes that started resulting from concerns being raised about Church Officers (there are 23 Core Groups currently ongoing).
- At the end of 2024 there are 22 former offenders who have active safeguarding agreements to attend church.
- 2 standard risk assessments have been completed and 1 independent risk assessment.

Alongside local casework, the team have engaged with two key national safeguarding reviews (Scolding review regarding Soul Survivor, and Makin review regarding John Smyth). We produced a 7-minute briefing which was shared widely so the learning could be disseminated across the diocese.

- [Soul Survivor 7-minute briefing](#)
- [Makin 7-minute briefing](#)

The Makin review followed by the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury regarding safeguarding matters has had a significant impact on the work of the team. Contacts with the team saw a sharp increase and many people expressed a depth of emotion when engaging with us. Safeguarding in the Church of England is under the spotlight currently and we are doing what we can to continue to promote safeguarding as the 'golden thread' that weaves through everything. As Bishop Stephen conveys, safeguarding is not an added extra, it is a gospel imperative.

## **VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS** – *Victims and survivors experience the timeliness and quality of Church bodies' responses to disclosures, and their subsequent support, as positively meeting their needs, including their search for justice and helping their healing process.*

*'I was listened to with empathy and I was completely believed from the beginning. My previous experience with the Church of England was that I wasn't believed. I was someone who should 'go away' rather than someone to be listened to. It's been a very very good experience.'*

*'For the first time in my life I've been open about what happened to me.'*

**Survivors' feedback**

*'I was offered a Bishop's apology... The time with the Bishop was a sacramental moment – having being listened to so carefully. Noone told me I should forgive'*

*'My goal has been completely fulfilled.'*

During 2024 the dedicated Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) we had working with the team for 2 days a week left due to a promotion with the National Safeguarding Team. We used this opportunity to evaluate and reimagine our offer to victims and survivors of church related abuse. Our new full-time caseworker is undergoing IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) and ISVA training and will become a 'Survivor Champion'. We are looking to develop a Victim/survivor panel which will provide survivor engagement and challenge to our policy, process and practice.

**LEARNING, SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT** – All those engaged in safeguarding-related activity in Church bodies receive the type and level of learning, professional development, support and supervision necessary to respond to safeguarding situations, victims and survivors, and respondents, effectively.

**Courses delivered in 2024:**

	No. of courses	No. attendees
<b>Leadership pathway</b>	40	331
<b>PSO Induction</b>	6	38
<b>PSO Workshop</b>	11	144

*"I did very much appreciate the thoughtful and knowledgeable answers from some of the other people on the course. I learned from them, and so*

*"I think it was informative and well delivered. I learnt a good deal and had the chance to think things through and discuss things."*

*[Participant on online course]  
"Face to face training is much better for me. I found myself swept away by some of the participants and then couldn't get my voice heard when I tried so a bit frustrating"*

*Along with Prevention, we recognise this standard is one that requires our particular focus in 2025. With the departure of our in-house trainer last year, training has been delivered by external trainers with a member of the safeguarding casework team in attendance. The feedback from this change of mode has been mixed with some positive feedback and others struggling with the national material and mode of delivery. We have always required that course participants evaluate the impact of their learning, but in the past, we have not used analysed this data for emerging trends to shape future work which is something we want to consider going forward.*

*We have consistently excellent levels of training compliance for roles that we actively monitor and send reminders for (Clergy, retired clergy with Permission to Officiate and Licenced Lay Ministers) with 97% compliance and only 1% of the cohort out of date for their training by less than 3 months without a valid reason such as illness. However, we do not have a good level of oversight for other volunteer roles within parishes which is something that needs developing.*

*The national safeguarding team have made some changes to the Learning and Development Framework and in light of recommendations from INEQE we will be reviewing how we deliver and measure the impact of safeguarding training in the coming year.*

## **2025 Learning Priorities**

- **Support** – *Develop the support available for those in safeguarding roles within parishes via monthly online PSO drop-in sessions, and debrief sessions routinely being offered to people who have received disclosures or dealt with difficult safeguarding situations.*
- **Training compliance and effectiveness** – *Develop greater oversight of safeguarding training compliance of volunteers and measure the effectiveness of training.*
- **Trauma Informed Practice** – *develop and deliver trauma informed practice training for Diocesan Board of Finance staff, volunteers and other key leaders within the diocese.*

# SAFEGUARDING



**Diocese of Salisbury**  
Making Jesus Known



*Embedding safeguarding at the heart of the church's mission as we realise our vision to be a safe space for everyone*

## AREAS OF WORK

### CULTURE & LEADERSHIP



Creating safe and healthy cultures across Salisbury Diocese through effective leadership



### PREVENTION

Creating resilient environments to prevent abuse from taking place



### RESPONDING TO RISK

Identifying, assessing and working in partnership to manage known safeguarding risks



### SURVIVORS AND VICTIMS

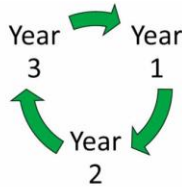
Listening to, engaging with, supporting, and learning from those with lived experience of abuse



### LEARNING, SUPERVISION & SUPPORT

Equipping Church Officers to respond effectively to safeguarding situations

## 2025 focus:



Each year, two Safeguarding Standards are explored in greater depth on a three year cycle. In 2025 we are focussing on Prevention, and Learning Supervision and Support.

### PREVENTION



**Improved safeguarding systems** available for safeguarding within parishes – continue the roll out of Safeguarding Dashboards, introduce Safeguarding Hubs, and change DBS provider.

**Increased levels of DBS compliance** – Alongside changing DBS provider, to review and clarify roles.

**Clarity of roles and responsibilities** - Ensure all church officers are aware of their responsibilities and remit within safeguarding.

### LEARNING & SUPPORT

**Support** – Develop the support available for those in safeguarding roles within parishes via monthly online PSO drop-in sessions, and debrief sessions routinely being offered to people who have received disclosures or dealt with difficult safeguarding situations.

**Training compliance and effectiveness** - Develop greater oversight of safeguarding training compliance of volunteers and measure the effectiveness of training.

**Trauma Informed Practice\*** – Develop and deliver trauma informed practice training for Diocesan Board of Finance staff, volunteers and other key leaders within the diocese.



\*For more information regarding trauma-informed practice [click](#)