



Diocese of Leicester
Diocesan Safeguarding Oversight Group
Annual Report to Bishop's Advisory Forum 2024

Contents

| | Page |
|---|-------------|
| 1. Purpose and Summary | 3 |
| 2. Membership of DSOG | 3 |
| 3. Independent Chair's Introduction | 4 |
| 4. National Safeguarding Standards | 6 |
| Standard One: Leadership, Culture and Capacity | 7 |
| Standard Two: Prevention | 10 |
| Standard Three: Recognising, assessing and managing risk | 12 |
| Standard Four: Victims and survivors | 15 |
| Standard Five: Learning, Supervision and Support | 18 |
| 5. Conclusion | 22 |
| Appendix A: Feedback from Training | 23 |

Diocesan Safeguarding Oversight Group

Annual Report 2024 for Bishop's Advisory Forum

&

Trustee Board

Purpose & Summary

This annual report covers the activity of the Diocesan Safeguarding Oversight Group, its sub-groups, and the Diocesan Safeguarding Team in the 2024 calendar year. Its purpose is to provide an opportunity for the Bishop's Advisory Forum (and ultimately the Trustee Board) to understand more fully the safeguarding work that is undertaken, to be assured that the Independent Chair and external members of DSOG are satisfied that safeguarding provision in the Diocese is effective, to have the opportunity to raise any concerns and to prompt the Forum and Board to discuss matters raised in the report and consider any necessary action. The report is also intended for publication on the diocesan website.

This year for the first time the report is structured around the National Safeguarding Standards and QA Framework, published in the second half of 2023. The report covers the context in which safeguarding takes place at national, diocesan and local level. The national context has continued to be extremely challenging with a knock-on effect more locally and this is reflected in the report. The report covers major developments in safeguarding, particularly in the last year the moves towards implementation of the Regional Safeguarding Model and adoption of the national casework system, MyConcern. It also provides information about the work of DSOG and its sub-groups during the year, the Independent Chair's perspective, the work of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST), engagement with victims and survivors, safeguarding in Leicester Cathedral, training, safeguarding in church settings and the impact of the Parish Dashboards.

Membership of DSOG

The membership of the Oversight Group is as follows.

Independent Chair:

Adrienne Plunkett - Independent Chair

External members:

Ruth Lake – Director Adult Social Care and Safeguarding, Leicester City Council, representing Leicester Children & Adult Services

Shabnum Popat – Clinical Lead, Quetzal

Kaye Knowles – Deputy Head, Probation Service

Des Hearnshaw – Leicestershire Police

Lindsay Bampton – Safeguarding Partnership (deputises for Ruth Lake)

Diocesan and Cathedral Staff:

Rachael Spiers – Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA)
Claire Wood – Archdeacon of Loughborough
Karen Rooms – Dean of Leicester
Andy Brockbank – Director of Operations and Governance
James Pickersgill – Bishop’s Chaplain
Florence Gildea – Head of Communications

Parish Safeguarding Coordinator Representatives:

Julie Croysdale – Safeguarding Coordinator
Pete Coopey – Safeguarding Coordinator (joined during 2024)

Also during the year, the following have stood in during either a sabbatical or period of maternity leave:

Paul Betts (for James Pickersgill)
Richard Trethewey (for Claire Wood)
Gemma Starkings (for Florence Gildea)

Independent Chair’s Introduction

In my introduction for the 2023 Annual Report, I referred to the year having been a challenging one for safeguarding in the Church of England and to a crisis in safeguarding. A year on, following the publication of the Makin Review into the horrific abuse perpetrated by John Smyth in England and Africa and the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Church is again facing an unprecedented crisis. Our priorities must be the care of victims and survivors of church-related abuse and in disseminating and acting upon the learning. This was the clear message in Bishop Martyn’s video in response to the review.

National Developments: The Response Group considering the recommendations of Professor Jay’s report, *The Future of Safeguarding*, will be reporting to the General Synod in February 2025. It is anticipated that decisions will then be made regarding the potential establishment of two independent organisations, one to assume responsibility for the day-to-day operation of safeguarding and the other to provide oversight and scrutiny.

Two key recommendations made by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) have been progressed. The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor’s role will be changed to that of Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO), a more strategic role and with the authority to act independently of the diocesan bishop, and the National Safeguarding Team have appointed the East Midlands Regional Safeguarding Lead, who will provide professional supervision to the DSOs. There is a certification process, and it is anticipated the Diocese of Leicester will be accredited by Summer 2025.

An independent organisation, INEQE, has been commissioned nationally to undertake safeguarding audits of all dioceses and cathedrals and these commenced early in 2024. Leicester Diocese and Cathedral will be audited in Autumn 2026. It is our intention to learn from the audits already undertaken to promote improvements in safeguarding practice and preparation for the audit is already underway.

Local developments: Safeguarding practice in the Diocese and Cathedral continues to develop. The National Safeguarding Standards and Performance Framework, launched in October 2023, have been widely promoted by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST) and the accompanying audit tools are being used, e.g. leadership and culture, safer recruitment. The format of this report reflects the five standards: Culture, Leadership and Capacity, Prevention, Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk, Victims and Survivors and Learning, Supervision and Support.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Oversight Group (DSOG) has continued to meet quarterly, supported by the Executive, Quality & Improvement (QISG), and Training Sub-Groups. Membership (listed above) has remained consistent, and attendance has been good. I am particularly grateful for the commitment made by our two Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator representatives and our members representing external agencies, i.e. Adult Services, Police, Probation, Quetzal.

I would also like to thank Ruth Lake, Director of Adult Services, City of Leicester, and DS Dan Cumpsty, Leicestershire Police, for their involvement with the QISG and participation in audits of safeguarding practice. This external scrutiny is vital.

Importantly, DSOG has moved forward with our key priorities including:

- Engaging with survivors over the production of the Diocese and Cathedral victims and survivors' care strategy.
- Engaging with Matt Long, Youth Engagement & Intergenerational Communities Enabler, to gain the views of children and young people about how to make church settings safer places.
- Developing a Safeguarding Intelligence Pack to facilitate the interrogation of data, e.g. in relation to referrals, risk assessments and training compliance.
- Establishing a training feedback process and an escalation process for non-compliance with national training requirements.
- Implementing the national electronic case system, MyConcern.

A sign of the recognition of the importance of safeguarding has been the engagement of myself and Rachael Spiers, DSA, with the Bishop's Leadership Team (BLT) and in discussions concerning the development of the Diocesan Strategy and Minster Communities. Regular updates have been shared with DSOG.

Over the year there has been increased recognition nationally and locally of the challenges facing Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinators (PSCs) and a local survey was undertaken to understand these more fully. The DST have been working to set up support networks and to link new PSCs with a 'buddy'. The PSCs are very much at the front line of prevention in parishes and support for them is vital.

The DST is highly knowledgeable and experienced and much valued across the Diocese and Cathedral. The issue of capacity in the DST has been raised in the last two Annual Reports. The need for additional capacity has been recognised by the BLT and it was agreed that funding for an additional part-time Assistant DSA should form part of the Diocese's bid to the National Church. Unfortunately, following discussion with the Church the bid had been delayed. This means that the DST continues to

function under considerable pressure, maybe other short-term means of funding this post could be considered.

Once again, the year ends with safeguarding in the Church facing challenges and uncertainty. However, alongside this there are significant developments, i.e. implementation of the IICSA recommendations, the National Standards and the INEQE audit programme, and it is a sign of the resilience of the DST that they continue to provide a highly professional service, supported by staff across the Diocese and Cathedral, notably the PSCs.

Adrienne Plunkett
DSOG Independent Chair

Church of England National Safeguarding Standards and Quality Assurance Framework

The National Safeguarding Standards have been in development since 2020, with the aim of establishing consistent standards across the Church at all levels and to provide a means of answering the question ‘How good is our safeguarding activity?’ The Standards were launched by the National Safeguarding Team in October 2023.

There are five standards:

- **One: Prevention:** Ensuring that church settings have a range of measures which together are effective in preventing abuse.
- **Two: Culture, leadership and capacity:** Securing the safe and healthy culture, effective leadership, resourcing and scrutiny arrangements necessary to deliver high quality safeguarding practices and outcomes.
- **Three: Recognising, assessing and managing risk:** Ensuring processes are of a high quality and result in positive outcomes.
- **Four: Victims and survivors:** Seeking to place victims and survivors at the centre of safeguarding responses and to ensure that they experience the Church’s responses as helpful.
- **Five: Learning, supervision and support:** Emphasising the importance of training, professional development, support and supervision for roles within the Church.

Each standard has several ‘What good looks like’ indicators to identify strengths, as well as areas for development. These were drawn from feedback from victims & survivors, discussion with safeguarding professionals, research evidence and previous national audits. Resources and tools have been developed to support diocesan, parish and cathedral settings.

Work to cascade the National Safeguarding Standards

A workshop was held on 17 January 2024 attended by DSOG members and key members of diocesan and Cathedral staff. Sam Nunney from the National Safeguarding Team (NST) demonstrated the Standards Excel audit tool and small groups worked on each of the five standards, completing the tool for the Diocese, which helped to identify areas for improvement.

Cascading the Framework more widely started in May, inviting PSCs, clergy, church wardens and PCC members to four online briefing sessions through June, July and September. The purpose was to give an overview of the Safeguarding Standards and some of the indicators of “what good looks like”, how these will be embedded in the Safeguarding Dashboard, to share resources developed by the NST and help people think about next steps. We aimed to make clear that many church settings would already have arrangements in place to meet the requirements and there was no expectation that every indicator would be met overnight. We were delighted with the response, with over 240 coordinators, churchwardens, clergy and PCC members attending.

There is evidence that church settings are engaging with the Standards, some using the parish audit tool to establish a base line for their safeguarding activity and to help them focus on one or two areas for improvement and some planning PCC awaydays. The DST will continue to identify ways to support parishes as the Standards become part of our everyday work.

Safeguarding practice in the diocese and cathedral will be the subject of an independent audit by INEQE in October 2026. There will be more information nearer the time and opportunities for people to participate in this, but we know that the Safeguarding Standards and QA Framework will form the basis for this audit.

INEQE had undertaken about twelve diocese and cathedral audits by the end of 2024 and there is an expectation that INEQE will prepare a summary of the audits undertaken in the first year. There are some common recommendations emerging, notably in relation to training, which are being followed up by the National Safeguarding Team. Additional recommendations relate to dioceses appointing Directors of Safeguarding and having standalone safeguarding risk registers. The reports from the first year of the audit programme can be read here: [Independent safeguarding audit programme | The Church of England](#)

The diocese’s Safeguarding Strategy has also been structured around the Standards so that progress can be monitored.

Safeguarding Standard One: Culture, Leadership & Capacity

Leadership

The Bishop’s Leadership Team (BLT) has engaged with the resources developed by the National Safeguarding Team to support the Standards. On 15 October 2024 the Independent Chair and DSA attended BLT to support their discussion using the Responding Well Healthy Culture Assessment Tool. One of the follow up actions is

commissioning an external facilitator to undertake a survey to seek the views of groups of staff and/or volunteers in dioceses and the cathedral, as a means of gaining an understanding of how the leadership and culture in the diocese are viewed.

In June, Bishop Martyn welcomed PSCs to our annual service hosted by Leicester Cathedral. The DST, diocesan staff and the Independent Chair of DSOG gathered in recognition of the importance of PCSs and to give thanks for their vital work in keeping children, young people and vulnerable adults safe.

In November, Bishop Martyn and Bishop Saju, launched a video to support Safeguarding Sunday on 17th November. They talked about the importance of safeguarding and recognised the tireless work and vital ministry of those in our diocese who are committed to creating a safe, open and welcoming environment for all. They stressed that

“In the heart of our churches, schools and worshipping communities lies a profound responsibility - the duty of care for everyone. This is core to our mission and our life together as a church. So, PCC members, Safeguarding Coordinators, indeed, every person within our churches has a responsibility for safeguarding because every person is created in the image of God and precious to God, so we all have a role to play.”

PSCs have used the video in Safeguarding Sunday activities and PCC meetings.

Executive Sub-Group

The Executive Sub-Group comprises the Archdeacon of Loughborough (as Safeguarding Lead), DSA, Bishop’s Chaplain, the Dean, and Director of Operations and Governance. Sabbaticals for two members had an impact in 2024, but work has continued, ably assisted by those standing in. Group membership has expanded to include the Dean of Leicester, providing an important link to the Cathedral.

Inevitably over the last year much of the Sub-Group’s time has been taken up with events outside the Diocese of Leicester, including the Future of Safeguarding recommendations, the Scolding Review into Soul Survivor and more recently the Makin Report. A discussion of the Soul Survivor report informed the presentation of this report at the December meeting of DSOG.

The Sub-Group has been instrumental in supporting the DST in the rollout of the National Safeguarding Casework Management System, MyConcern, and reviewing and continuing the implementation of the Diocesan Safeguarding Strategy.

Recognising the importance of preparation for the INEQE audit, the remit of the Sub-Group has been expanded to include this task, with an additional two meetings planned in 2025 and two additional members of BLT joining for audit preparation.

Safeguarding in Leicester Cathedral

Following the Cathedral achieving charitable status and the Chapter becoming Trustees, Chapter Sub-Committees were formally constituted, with the inclusion of the Safeguarding Committee which now has an Independent Chair, Mark Dalton. The Chapter Safeguarding Lead, the Canon Pastor, submits a written report to each

Chapter meeting, which the Committee also receives, alongside the annual report to the Cathedral congregation. Cathedral procedures and related risk assessments were reviewed prior to re-entering the building. New staff and volunteers, together with far more events and once more welcoming visitors, have meant that there has been a period of continued reflection as systems have bedded down and things begin to change at St Martin's House.

During 2024 the Cathedral undertook an extensive process of collation and standardisation of procedures across all functions. There will need to be further adjustments when the Cathedral takes possession of its new building, and things change again. Since reopening, the system of internal record keeping of safeguarding related incidents or concerns has been changed, to pull them together. The Cathedral continues to work very closely with, and is very grateful for, the Diocesan Safeguarding Team through their Service Level Agreement. Increased visitors and increased social needs have meant that the Cathedral's ability to signpost people in need to the right agencies has had to increase. Signage in the building points people not only to Cathedral and Diocesan personnel, but also to helplines and local agencies across a wide range of specialisms. The Cathedral Chaplaincy plays a critical role here.

The Cathedral continues to ensure that staff and volunteers are safely recruited and undertake the appropriate safeguarding training. Other relevant training, including through Chaplaincy meetings, has also been offered, with reasonable take up.

Revd Canon Alison Adams

Canon Pastor, Leicester Cathedral

Diocesan Safeguarding Oversight Group (DSOG)

DSOG has continued to meet quarterly during 2024. Rachael Spiers, DSA, and Andy Brockbank, Director of Operations and Governance, meet monthly with Adrienne Plunkett, Independent Chair, to facilitate communication between meetings, with the emphasis on progressing outstanding actions. Adrienne Plunkett also meets quarterly with Bishop Martyn to consider both national and local safeguarding issues.

Inevitably some of the focus during the year has been on the major reports emerging from reviews at national level. Time has been set aside for discussion of the Jay Report on safeguarding structures, the Scolding Report on Soul Survivor, as well as an initial discussion of the Makin Report.

DSOG has also been engaged in discussions of developments in the diocese and their impact on the effectiveness of safeguarding, with invitations extended to:

- Barry Hill, Strategy Development Enabler, in respect of diocesan strategy.
- Claire Bampton, Diocesan Programme Manager, in respect of Minster Community implementation.
- Matt Long, Youth Engagement Officer, in respect of the Growing Faith initiative and potential work with children and young people in seeking their views about how to make churches safe places.

- Sue Willetts, Diocesan Director of Ordinands, in respect of safer recruitment and training of clergy.
- Bishop Saju, Jessie Tang, Intercultural Ministry Director, and Sophie Holder, Director of Racial Equity, in respect of racial equity in the diocese.

This has enabled DSOG to engage with these aspects of diocesan work and ensure that safeguarding considerations are taken into account, e.g. safeguarding was prioritised in the diocesan strategy documentation.

NST colleagues working on the implementation of the IICSA 1 and 8 recommendations, (Regional Safeguarding model and DSO role) Bev Bickley, Stakeholder Engagement Manager, and Kate Dench, Business Change Specialist, attended in September, enabling DSOG to gain a fuller understanding of the implementation process.

During the year DSOG has undertaken a mid-term review of the Diocesan Safeguarding Strategy. The Strategy was already structured around the Standards, so a major overhaul was not necessary. Progress is being made on most of the priorities identified in the Action Plan and priority actions for 2025 have been identified.

Our thanks are due to colleagues from external agencies who provide highly valuable insights as part of this work of overseeing safeguarding provision in the diocese.

We are fortunate to have two Safeguarding Coordinator representatives on the Diocesan Safeguarding Oversight Group (DSOG), Julie Croysdale and Pete Coopey, who bring a vital parish perspective to our discussions.

A bulletin is circulated within the diocese after each DSOG meeting to increase understanding of the role of DSOG and the areas of focus.

Safeguarding Standard Two: Prevention

It is recognised nationally and locally that parishes are at the forefront of safeguarding in the Church of England, they play a key role in ensuring that church settings are safe places for children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Support for Parish Safeguarding Coordinators (PSCs):

The role of PSC comes with significant responsibilities and challenges and the DST endeavours to ensure a high level of support is provided. Alongside induction sessions for new PSCs, advice & support and a regular newsletter, we offer bi-monthly drop-in sessions. We have maintained the pattern of zoom and face-to face meetings and attendance ranges between 15 and 30+ PSCs at each session. Adrienne Plunkett, Independent Chair, has joined some of the drop-ins and this has been important in ensuring PSCs feel valued and listened to. Topics have included an overview of the Jay report, the Future of Safeguarding, male victims of domestic abuse, the Standards, Safeguarding Sunday, and the Makin report, as well as updates about training and the Parish Dashboard.

Links are made between our discussions and the Standards and there is time for PSCs to raise issues and to share practice. A recent development has been to create a summary after each drop-in to share information with PSCs unable to attend.

The DST considered it was important to offer an additional meeting in the aftermath of the publication of the Makin Review, in recognition of the anger and distress caused.

Parish Safeguarding Coordinator (PSC) survey

In June, as part of the increasing recognition, both nationally and locally, of the considerable demands placed on PSCs, the two PSC representatives on DSOG invited PSCs to complete a brief survey. The purpose of this was to gain a fuller understanding of the challenges facing PSCs and seek suggestions of ways to provide additional support. The findings, which were very helpful, are outlined below:

- **Key challenges faced:**
 - Training – lack of compliance/need to chase.
 - Communication
 - PCC resistance
 - Degree of confusion about training requirements
 - Feeling overwhelmed/inadequate/lonely
 - Role much harder where there is a lack of Incumbent.

- **Support already accessed:**
 - Diocesan Safeguarding Team
 - Parish Dashboard
 - Incumbents/churchwardens/peers

- **Other help that would be useful:**
 - Support from PCCs
 - Sharing/networking/links with other PSCs/buddying/learning from others
 - Consider any opportunities for simplification.
 - Example policies
 - Quick zoom meetings
 - Centralised reminders of training (being worked on)

The Independent Chair, a PSC rep, the DST and Archdeacons met to consider the responses. Feedback has been given to PSCs and the DST are looking at how to take forward the ideas of PSCs i.e. buddying, organising PSC clusters and creating a bank of role descriptions & risk assessments. In addition, the Archdeacons have been promoting the role and responsibilities of PCCs in supporting their PSC and in relation to safeguarding, as outlined in the Parish Safeguarding Handbook.

Parish Dashboards

The Parish Dashboard has become an important tool, not just for helping PCCs and PSCs manage safeguarding compliance locally, but also for providing a picture of safeguarding implementation across the diocese. Take-up of the Dashboard is now over 90%, although this includes a small number of parishes who have yet to make active use of it. Analysis of church attendance figures has shown that the majority of parishes not yet making use of the Dashboard are predominantly those with tiny congregations in predominantly rural areas.

In this context, the key progress in 2024 has been seen in parishes making greater use of the Parish Dashboard and it is encouraging to see that 72% are now operating at Level 2 or 3, up from 68% last year. Nearly 50% (47.5%) are at Level 3, up from 40% a year ago.

Work has been undertaken nationally to adapt the Parish Dashboard to fit the National Safeguarding Standards and ten of Leicester's PSCs took part in a pilot to support this development. The change will go live in Leicester Diocese from January 2025. Other work planned for 2025 is to focus support upon the remaining parishes currently operating at Level 1.

The most recent report to the Quality and Improvement Sub-Group highlighted safeguarding training for PCC members as one of the biggest challenges. More positively, the following areas showed significant improvement during the year:

- Retention of records and data protection (48%, up from 29%).
- Social media policy (44%, up from 28%).

The Dashboard continues to be promoted by DST and the advice and encouragement provided by Pete Holloway, Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, has undoubtedly been significant in the increased use of the Dashboard.

Seeking the views of children and young people:

Matt Long, Youth Engagement & Intergenerational Communities Enabler, attended DSOG in June to present his work with the Bishop's Children and Youth Council, which aims to amplify young people's voices. Each term, a listening exercise is conducted, and the feedback is responded to by the bishops. This process is being enhanced to ensure genuine listening to children and young people, and we hope it will be possible to have a safeguarding-focused exercise in the coming year.

Safeguarding Standard 3: Recognising, assessing & managing risk

Quality and Improvement Sub-Group (QISG)

Previously known as the Quality Assurance and Review Group, the renamed Sub-Group met three times in 2024. We are grateful to DS Dan Cumpsty, Leicestershire

Police, for chairing the group and to Ruth Lake, Adult & Children’s Services, Leicester City Council, for their participation.

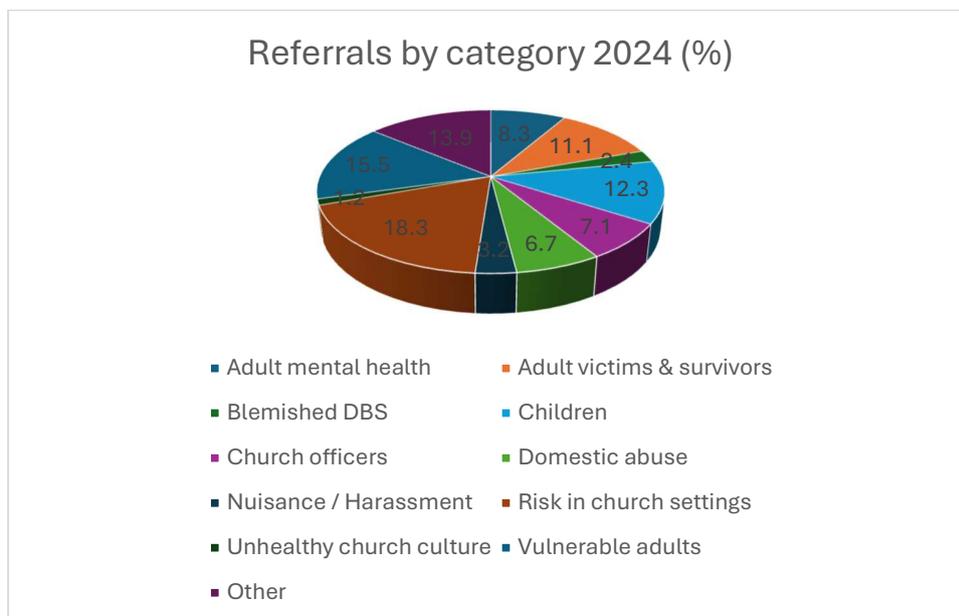
In 2024 QISG undertook two internal audits, focused on the following aspects:

- Safer recruitment and risk management in relation to blemished DBS checks.
- Safer Recruitment and People Management Assessment Tool in relation to DBF staff and volunteers.

During the year QISQ has supported the development of DSOG’s Safeguarding Intelligence Pack and continued to monitor information from the Parish Dashboards. There was also discussion of the INEQE audit report on Salisbury Diocese and Cathedral; one of the early independent audits.

Referrals to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team

Responding to referrals and providing advice to church settings remains a central part of the work of the DSA and ADSA. Referrals can include requests for advice involving a limited number of contacts, as well as matters requiring referral to the police, Children or Adults Social Care and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), which require complex involvement over many months. Not all referrals come within the work of the DST, but we remain committed to encouraging church settings to seek advice about concerns, so we can signpost as necessary. There continues to be variety in referrals and collaborating with the Archdeacons and other diocesan colleagues is central to responding well. The link to the Archdeacons is particularly important because of their key oversight role of parishes, PCCs, churchwardens and clergy and in many situations the DST and Archdeacons work closely together.



There are currently 19 church safety plans in place to formally manage those potentially posing a risk in church settings. 8 safety plans were closed during the year

and 7 new plans put in place. Church safety plans are supported by close working with church settings and colleagues from the Police and Probation.

In 2024, around 250 referrals were received. This is similar to 2023, and the DST remains very busy with around 100 pieces of work currently open to the DSA and ADSA. It is important to note referrals continue to be overwhelmingly focused on adults.

The period immediately following publication of the Makin Review (7 November) was particularly demanding as the DST undertook work in relation to a retired priest in the diocese named in the report, responded to referrals triggered by the review and publicity, supported known victims and survivors (not linked to Makin) who were angry and distressed, talked to church officers anxious that they may not have reported concerns appropriately and supported PSCs and clergy working hard to ensure our churches are safe spaces.

National Casework system (MyConcern)

In November the DST 'onboarded' active cases onto MyConcern, the national casework system. This required considerable preparation and training. There is still work to complete this process, alongside day-to-day casework, and we have been grateful for everyone's patience whilst we navigate this new system. Importantly, the system will enable the sharing of information and identification of linked cases and potential risks nationally. Additionally, it will provide casework statistics for monitoring purposes, as well as creating reports to identify trends and other useful information more effectively.

Safeguarding Standard 4: Victims & survivors

Focus Group and Survivor Care Strategy.

A key priority in the Safeguarding Strategy, overseen by DSOG, has been the co-production of a Survivor Care Strategy.

In December 2023, the DST publicised the plan to create a time limited Focus Group to help develop a survivor strategy for Leicester Diocese and the Cathedral, shaping future care and support for survivors. It was important to ensure there were opportunities for survivors' voices to contribute to practice development.

Following the publicity, including a flyer to all church settings, we were delighted to establish a small group of survivors interested in supporting and contributing to this work over the past 8 months. The work of the Focus Group was facilitated by Shabnum Popat, Clinical Lead for Quetzal (a local counselling service working with childhood abuse), and Rachael Spiers, DSA. They met individually with those expressing an interest and the Group had terms of reference & an agreement of expectations.

The Strategy is now in its first draft form. It sets out how the diocese and Cathedral will care for and support those who have disclosed abuse related to church settings, as well as those who have experienced abuse outside of the church. From the outset, a clear priority for the Focus Group has been the care and support for survivors who may be in church settings, including those who may not already be known. This work highlighted different perspectives about what people might need and excitingly, a

potential education piece to undertake with church settings. It also outlines future plans for how we will seek feedback from victims & survivors, to shape the service the DST offers. We anticipate work on the Strategy will be completed in the New Year. It has always been the plan that the Focus Group will conclude at this point, but the Strategy will outline how victims & survivors will be involved in future practice developments.

The opportunity to work in this way, to seek the views of survivors, has been hugely valuable. Above everything, we are indebted to the Focus Group for their work and time, for being prepared to share learning from painful experiences and for their patience as we have worked with them.

“My hope is that (this strategy) will make some changes in the diocese and churches at a face-to-face level”

Member of focus group

Shabnum Popat, survivor engagement lead on DSOG

My role within DSOG focused on survivor engagement, ensuring that survivors' voices were heard and that the Diocese created a safe, welcoming environment that supported survivors in feeling acknowledged and valued. I have been collaborating with Rachael Spiers, DSA, on the development of a survivor engagement strategy, which is being co-designed with input from a survivor focus group.

This focus group was convened in a controlled environment to prioritise their emotional safety and safeguard their mental health. We engaged survivors through structured exercises and collected feedback via calls and meetings. Creating this space for survivors to share their perspectives was invaluable, allowing us to understand what they found helpful and what they wanted to see reflected in the strategy, based on their lived experiences.

This collaborative process has fostered a deeper understanding of inclusivity and emotional stability in our approach to engaging with survivors, ensuring that their needs and voices remain central to the strategy.

Safeguarding Standard 5: Learning, Supervision & Support

IICSA Recommendations 1 and 8

These are specific developments at national level in response to the recommendations of the report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) in the Church of England.

Recommendation 1 is ensuring that the DSA role is repurposed to allow professional freedom in decision making without reference to the bishop and Recommendation 8 is ensuring an external audit programme and consistency of safeguarding provision across dioceses. The current DSA role will become that of Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO), which carries greater independence and strategic responsibility within the diocese. The National Safeguarding Team (NST) has undertaken a pilot project involving a regional model with pathfinder dioceses receiving professional supervision from Regional Safeguarding Leads (RSL). The feedback has been positive, culminating in the roll out of the model across the Church of England. Given the significance of these developments, DSOG has taken an active interest in this work over the last year and two members of the NST presented to DSOG in September.

Preparations for the entry of the diocese into the new East Midlands region are now at an advanced stage. The RSL has been appointed and work is underway, using a national template, to develop the job description and person specification for the DSO role. Starting in early 2025, a process of transition and certification will take place up to the middle of the year, involving:

- Providing the RSL access to the casework system.
- Completion of supervision training by the DSO
- Supervision of the DSO passing to the RSL.

It is not anticipated that this will be a major change as in practice the DSA has not relied on approval from the Bishop for decisions to refer to the statutory authorities and other significant actions.

Feedback from DSA's Supervisor

Supervision provided by an Independent Social Worker began in Spring 2022 and has included reflecting on case work, strategic matters and wider discussions. The purpose of supervision has been to provide a structured process where reflections can take place, it offers slower thinking time which is helpful in the context of a safeguarding team who have such a varying spectrum of matters they assess and support with. Survivor engagement and views have consistently been included within reflections.

The current supervision arrangement will be coming to an end over the next few months as the Church of England have now appointed their Regional Safeguarding Lead who will take over supervision for the DSA of Leicester as well as other local dioceses.

Elisha Ward November 2024

Training Sub-Group

The Sub-Group has continued to meet three times during the year. At the start of 2024 Charmaine Odlum was welcomed as the PSC representative. The focus of the Sub-Group has continued to be on supporting the Safeguarding Training Officer (STO) and providing input for planning the annual PSC conference, as well as the following:

- Commenting on a model for collecting feedback on training.
- Consideration of the audit tools, accompanying the National Safeguarding Standards
- Responding to the consultation on the Learning and Development Framework.
- Exploring ways to ensure that people from other cultures, including those for whom English is not their first language, are able to engage fully with safeguarding training.
- Clarifying the diocesan escalation process for non-compliance with national training requirements.

The Sub-Group has considered the collection of training statistics, which is still challenging and time-consuming, but with the expectation that a joining up of systems will offer a significant improvement from mid-2025.

Training

Louise Warner continues as the full time Safeguarding Training Officer (STO).



During 2024 the Basic Awareness, Foundation, Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse (RADA) and PTO Safeguarding courses have been updated, with minimal changes to Safer Recruitment and People Management. Basic Awareness and Foundation now include a section with options for bellringers, chaplains, cathedral volunteers, children and youth and governance. The November RADA update has been significant, now based around 6 videos, discussions and a workbook. Work is underway on an implementation plan for early 2025.

Leadership training continues to make an impact, especially when we consider what we are doing to keep people safe. Action plans in response to the training tend to be practical, building on aspects raised in the training. Many participants identify a piece of learning as reading a document from the resources list or watching a video/programme. The 'Let There Be Light' documentary released by Matt and Beth Redman linked to their Soul Survivor experience has had a significant impact. The video also features in the Permission to Officiate (PTO) Safeguarding Training and has created significant reflection on power.

The STO has continued to offer face-to-face training as needed, with an emphasis on local courses. A new feedback sheet has been introduced to help capture meaningful feedback with a focus on the impact of training.

Recurrent themes from training include the challenges of safeguarding provision in parishes in vacancy, where PSCs can feel that not everyone *'gets safeguarding'*, and they are not supported. Some have expressed concern at the time commitment and work required, while others have found it beneficial. A question at the November PSC Conference was: When are we going to stop apologising for asking people to complete safeguarding training?

The Database Manager has continued to support the STO with extracting data from CMS in its most usable form, with work continuing to refine reports. as it still takes a considerable amount of time to generate information for the Intelligence Pack. The Director of Operations and Governance is exploring ways for AI to help generate compliance reports. There were challenges with keeping database information up to date following the loss of a staff member and this led to the build-up of a significant

backlog which has been cleared with the assistance of the Bishop’s Office. Without accurate data, analysis of compliance is challenging, with monitoring less effective. Work is being done to allow data sharing between systems; it is hoped this will allow direct transfer of course data from the safeguarding training portal to the CMS database.

You can see more details about safeguarding training here: [Training and Events - Diocese of Leicester \(anglican.org\)](https://www.anglican.org/training-and-events)

Feedback from training:

| |  |  |  |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Basic Awareness | 0 | 3 | 16 |
| Foundation | 0 | 1 | 12 |
| Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse | 0 | 2 | 11 |

Response to national reviews

Several important reports have been published during 2024 and have been drawn to the attention of DSOG.

1. Although published in late 2023, the Wilkinson Report into the events surrounding the disbanding of the Independent Safeguarding Board (IBS), is covered here as setting the scene for much that followed.
2. In February 2024, The Jay Report on the Future of Safeguarding in the Church of England recommended that safeguarding provision be made fully independent through the creation of what are referred to as Organisations A and B, with one of these providing the operational safeguarding service and the other scrutiny and oversight. In Organisation A safeguarding professionals would remain embedded in diocesan offices, working for an independent organisation.

The response of the national Church was to set up the Wilkinson Jay Response Group which offered 4 different models to General Synod in July 2024, with the Synod agreeing to continue exploration of the models.

DSOG discussed the Jay Report at its March meeting and was reassured that safeguarding arrangements in the diocese are robust, though the impact on staff morale of the report was noted. Further updates were provided to subsequent meetings.

These two reports focusing on structure and process were then followed in the second half of the year by two reports focused on very high-profile safeguarding cases.

3. The Scolding Review into Soul Survivor, published in September, covered the inappropriate behaviour and spiritual abuse by Mike Pilavachi. As noted elsewhere in this report, an expanded Executive Sub-Group looked at this report in some detail which enabled a report to DSOG in December 2024.
4. Most significantly, the Makin Report into the horrific abuse perpetrated by John Smyth was published in November, resulting in the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury and sending shockwaves through the Church of England. An initial discussion of the implications of the report took place at the DSOG December meeting, a more in-depth look will take place in March 2025.

In these discussions DSOG is focused on implications for the Diocese of Leicester. Throughout this challenging year of instability and uncertainty prompted by these reports, DSOG has continued to be confident in the DST and in safeguarding provision in the diocese, noting the significant contribution of Parish Safeguarding Coordinators. The impact on the team of this ongoing uncertainty is, however, noted.

Conclusion

This report ends, as it began, reflecting on the unprecedented turmoil of 2024 and the challenges it has created for safeguarding work in the Church of England. In this situation of crisis, it is hard to find the right balance between naively asserting that everything is working well or stating, as some people suggest, that the Church of England is simply not a safe place.

It is, nonetheless, the view of DSOG that effective safeguarding practice is taking place in the diocese, that the DST is suitably knowledgeable, experienced and very dedicated, and that there is strong commitment to safeguarding from leadership in the Diocese and Cathedral. There are, of course, challenges. Issues around the capacity of the DST have been noted for several years now. The challenges of implementing the change to the Regional Safeguarding Model while at the same time expecting to hear from General Synod news of an even bigger change are not underestimated. Other challenges are noted in the report, such as the feeling among PSCs of an increasing burden, managing data in relation to training compliance, work to strengthen safer recruitment and achieving full coverage with the Parish Dashboards. These are all issues that require attention and ongoing engagement.

At the same time, DSOG is pleased to report that the audits carried out on its behalf have yielded positive results and reassurance, that training feedback indicates appreciation for the work of the STO, that information required by the Oversight Group is available and provided in a timely fashion, and that the Team is well regarded by the statutory services.

Maintaining the good safeguarding work that takes place while addressing the challenges will not be easy in an environment in which safeguarding failures in the Church remain in the media spotlight and structural changes continue to develop. In this situation the DST will need good support from diocesan leadership to keep its focus on implementing the Strategy and preparing for the INEQE audit in 2026.