

Church of England Safeguarding Overview



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND



Click the  icon to
listen to Bishop Peter
Hancock, Bishop Sarah
Mullally and Graham Tilby

Our safeguarding commitments

Together we are building a safer Church for all.

Our work is based on the following six safeguarding commitments, agreed on by the bishops of the Church of England in 2017.

Promoting a safer environment and culture

Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children and vulnerable adults within the Church

Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation

Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons

Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons

Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others

Read the full [safeguarding policy](#) »



Welcome



“ Large numbers of children, young people and adults attend our churches through clubs, drop-ins, services and a whole range of other activities, every day of the week; this is where safeguarding is worked out and all church policies and practices have to be designed for this.

In the past few years safeguarding in the Church of England has undergone a programme of significant change. In 2015 a National Safeguarding Team (NST) was established to support our dioceses, parishes, churches and worshipping communities to be safer places for all.

“ Safeguarding is a Christian imperative and a responsibility that we all must undertake with thoughtfulness, commitment and care. The gospel affirms that every person is made in the image of God and that everybody is therefore valued and loved by God.

Changes in staffing, expenditure and legislation are already making a difference; the NST has introduced professional expertise, robust policies and guidance. Our core training modules are aimed at raising awareness and equipping people to have the confidence and skills they need to recognise and respond to those at risk of abuse. This includes a basic training module which is for everyone.

It is essential, however, that we continue to be vigilant and resolute and that we all take our safeguarding responsibilities seriously. We cannot be complacent, especially as progress has taken a long time, longer than it should have done and the price of delay has been high for those who continue to suffer from abuse.”

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Peter Hancock, Bishop of Bath and Wells, and Lead for Safeguarding

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We cannot forget the dreadful affect of misuse and abuse of power, which lies at the heart of all abuse and we must continue to strive for the Church to be a safer and welcoming place for all and a beacon of hope for all of society.”


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Bishop Peter Hancock



The National Safeguarding Team - promoting a safer Church

The National Safeguarding Team (NST), set up in 2015, provides the vital link with dioceses who support their church communities.

Their work includes developing and implementing national policy, casework on complex and high profile cases, commissioning lessons learned reviews, national survivor support and engagement work, co-ordinating independent diocesan safeguarding audits and strengthening and supporting national safeguarding networks. The NST is also leading the Church of England's engagement with the Independent Inquiry into **Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)** .

NST roles

National Safeguarding Adviser
Deputy National Safeguarding Adviser
National Senior Casework Manager
Provincial Safeguarding Adviser
(Lambeth)
Provincial Safeguarding Adviser
(Bishopthorpe)
National Learning & Development
Manager
IICSA Policy & Information Manager
Office Manager
IICSA Administrator
Administrator
Communications lead



Graham Tilby, National Safeguarding Adviser:

“ When I joined the NST it was clear that there was a great challenge ahead of the Church of England. We continue to develop a stronger national approach to safeguarding and strengthen the consistency and quality of its responses to protecting the vulnerable.

The NST will continue to play a key role in working collaboratively with those in and outside the Church to promote good safeguarding practice as integral to the mission of the whole Church.”

“ The Church has the unique potential to respond well to those who have been harmed by abuse and those who pose a risk to others, as it seeks to welcome all.

Of significance over the past 12 months has been the formation of the National Safeguarding Steering Group »

Details of national policy and practice guidance »

Safeguarding in our parishes

All parishes are expected to recruit a Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO). Voluntary or paid, their role is to oversee safeguarding activity at parish level.

What does a PSO do?

The duties of a PSO will vary, but some core responsibilities are at the heart of the role. They might include:

Supporting individuals with a safeguarding concern;

Responding to safeguarding concerns and reporting to the DSA;

Monitoring safeguarding activity within a church;

Implementing safeguarding policy; and

Reporting to the PCC.

A PSO in the Diocese of Chelmsford offers this insight to their role.

“It’s a busy church. We have a Sunday Club which caters for children up to the age of 11. We also have a vibrant choir of children and adults. They occasionally go away for tours lasting up to a week. I make sure we adhere to all safeguarding policies and anyone with a safeguarding responsibility has been through the appropriate DBS process.

I have also developed a buddy scheme. Made up of six adults, of varying ages, any child or vulnerable adult knows who to speak with if they want to talk or express a concern. All of the buddies provide me with a brief summary of any conversation, for me to keep on record.

I’ve also been working with a man who has complex mental health issues and learning disabilities. There is a small team that has been supporting him and exploring ways for him to access the statutory services he needs.”

Safeguarding in our dioceses



All 42 dioceses of the Church of England employ a Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA); larger dioceses have teams. The role of a DSA is now defined in church law.

What does a DSA do?

Case work - A DSA is the first point of call for someone wishing to report an allegation of abuse, which may have come from a parish. They manage allegations, advise survivors and report concerns, and work closely with external agencies.

Training - All those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the Church, must complete safeguarding training. A DSA will ensure a programme of training is implemented across a diocese.

Policies and procedures - A DSA will ensure national policy and guidance is communicated and embedded at a local level which may include churches, cathedrals, religious communities and other Church bodies.

Beth Miller is a DSA in the Diocese of Durham. She's been a professional social worker for more than 20 years.

“ Safeguarding isn't an added extra; it should be part and parcel of what we do.

Churches are connected with so many people through their community groups, social action, worship and other activities. It is therefore vital that they do everything they can to be safe and welcoming to all.

For me, two of the biggest challenges we face are: understanding the importance of training amongst clergy, church leaders, volunteers and staff; and recognising there is a need to share concerns of a safeguarding nature outside of the Church with our partner agencies.”



*Churches welcome
vulnerable people,
many of whom view it
as a safe place to be.
If any place should be safe,
a church should be it.*



Beth Miller,
DSA in the Diocese of Durham



Safeguarding in our cathedrals



All our cathedrals have access to a safeguarding adviser, working closely with the diocese. Stephen Lake is Dean of Gloucester and a member of the National Safeguarding Steering Group.

He represents cathedrals at a national level and is working with the NST on cathedral-centred policies that recognise a cathedral's unique safeguarding responsibilities.

“ Cathedrals are different to parishes. They don't just have established regular congregations and they are open at all times; people can come and go as they please. They often deal with a large number of children, visitors and volunteers and hold varied services every day.

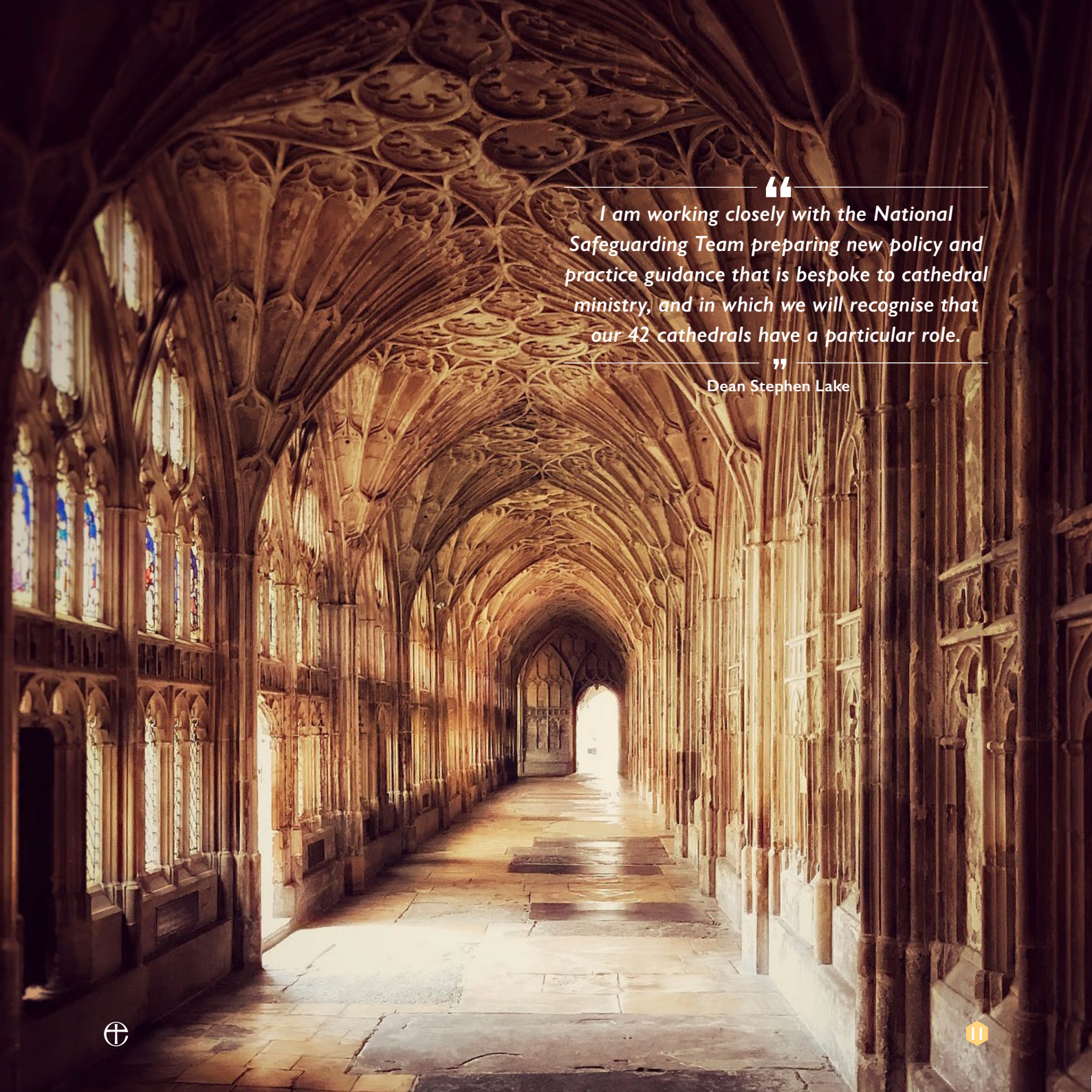
Together these elements of cathedral life present unique safeguarding responsibilities that we must meet.

Cathedrals are aware of their unique position and the risks associated with that and seek to administer their safeguarding provisions appropriately.

It is vital that we encourage our cathedrals to work in partnership and close relationship with others, to ensure they have access to professional safeguarding provision at all times. This might include their diocese, local authority and other statutory bodies.”



▶ Click to play



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I am working closely with the National Safeguarding Team preparing new policy and practice guidance that is bespoke to cathedral ministry, and in which we will recognise that our 42 cathedrals have a particular role.

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Dean Stephen Lake

Independent auditing



social care
institute for excellence

All dioceses are currently undergoing an independent audit of their safeguarding arrangements. The programme, supported by the House of Bishops, is being undertaken by **SCIE** , the Social Care Institute for Excellence, a charity and leading improvement support agency specialising in safeguarding.



SCIE commends the Church of England for taking such a proactive approach to auditing their safeguarding policies and practice. It's so important that influential organisations - such as the Church - recognise their role in safeguarding children and adults.



Tony Hunter,
SCIE chief executive

The audit process involves the examination of safeguarding leadership arrangements, local safeguarding activity, and the implementation of national policies and guidance.

SCIE has pioneered a particular collaborative approach to conducting safeguarding audits, focusing on the reasons why things go well, the cause of any problems, and the potential solutions.

Every diocese to have taken part so far, are publishing **SCIE's audit report**  (see Reviews and Reports section) of their safeguarding arrangements and their action plan. All dioceses will have had an independent audit by the end of 2017.

Working with survivors

The survivor experience is important to informing all safeguarding work within the Church. The Archbishop of Canterbury has said that the Church must “listen to survivors and put them first”.

The **National Safeguarding Panel** » was set up to provide vital reference and scrutiny from a range of voices, including survivors, on the development of policy and guidance.

A survivor’s voice: Jane, a professional woman and mother of two, experienced domestic abuse. Since her marriage came to an end, she has offered her input into the **Domestic Abuse Guidance** », a resource for all that provides information on how to respond well to allegations of domestic abuse.

Jane shares her story:

What happened? How did it make you feel?

I was emotionally abused by my ex-husband in a marriage lasting 13 years. From the beginning, he was very controlling. Although he felt threatening, he did not actually hit me, so it never occurred to me I was being abused.

Can you give us some examples of his behaviour?

He would tell me that if I tried to leave him he would call social services and tell them I was an unfit mother and have the children taken away. He made it very difficult for me to keep in touch with my friends, unless he approved of them.



I lost all sense of self-worth.



At the time, I would not have acknowledged that I was being abused. After 12 years, he was openly having an affair and at this point I turned to the chaplain at work to ask for help in staying in this difficult marriage. After he had heard my story, he suggested the marriage was dead and therefore gave me permission to consider divorce.

What can the church do?

The Church should be vocal in its condemnation of all forms of abuse. It should promote loving, caring, supportive relationships after the example of Jesus. Churches should be places where victims/survivors can tell their story in confidence.

I felt trapped by my belief in the Church's teaching of lifelong marriage. I made my vows in church and intended to stay in my marriage for life.

How are you now? Is it possible to recover?

Recovery from abuse is a lifelong journey. The feelings of guilt, inadequacy and failure stay with me. I have been lucky to meet people who have been supportive and encouraging and have helped me on the path to a fulfilling life. However, I still constantly battle with my low self-confidence. My local church has been very supportive.

Safeguarding training for all

The NST is committed to providing safeguarding training and support to all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the Church.

“*It’s important that all parishes, dioceses, cathedrals and other worshipping communities are aware of the safeguarding training available, and implement it as necessary within their local context. The training is revised regularly and has the full support of our bishops.*”

National Safeguarding Training and Development Manager

Training guidance », agreed on by the bishops of the Church of England, outlines a best practice approach and a framework for delivering safeguarding training.

The framework provides the scope for training delivery and sets out details of core and specialist training modules.

The modules ensure all those with any safeguarding responsibility are trained in aspects of safeguarding relevant to their role.

The basic training module, open to all, can be completed via the **NST’s online learning hub** », whilst others must be completed face-to-face through the diocese.



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I know we have made some progress but we still have so much to learn and to do, and we need to do it quickly. I cannot imagine what it costs survivors to come forward, and we owe it to them to act swiftly and compassionately. How we respond to those who have survived abuse in any form, whether as a child or an adult, is a measure of our humanity, compassion and of the Church's mission in the world.

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Bishop Sarah Mullally,
member of the NSSG

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We cannot place a high enough importance on safeguarding issues. It is vital that lessons are learned throughout the whole of the Church of England. Every day, the vulnerable come to us for shelter, for support and for comfort. Their trust cannot be taken for granted.

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Archbishop Justin Welby



If you are concerned that someone you know is at risk of, or is being abused, or presents a risk to others, please seek advice from a safeguarding adviser or, if necessary, report the matter to the local authority social care services or to the police without delay.