

Safeguarding: Annual Report 2024

Introduction

Safeguarding within the diocese and within the Church of England is unique due to a combination of its organisational structure, theological foundations, and historical context. emphasizing its importance in ensuring the safety and well-being of all, especially vulnerable adults and children. This is recognised by the independent secular members of the DSAP.

The DSAP's terms of reference have not been updated nationally, and so the panel continue to hold the responsibility for overseeing the implementation and review of policies and procedures for safeguarding children and adults throughout the diocese and for developing and maintaining good practice in relation to the safety and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. The current membership of the panel and the terms of reference and constitution can be found on the Diocesan [website](#).

There have been additional new members to the panel over the last year, including Ms Neeve Bishop (Head of Hertfordshire Probation Delivery Unit), Ms Clare Griffiths (Deputy Head of Hertfordshire Probation Delivery Unit), and Mrs Helen Schmitz (PSO and a volunteer trainer for the Diocese.) The independent chair and independent members bring professional secular experience and perspective to the panel's work. This independence is especially important following the national events and difficulties in 2024, and with the recent recommendations, such as those within the Jay Report, advocating independent safeguarding structures, reflecting the Church's commitment to reform. The panel has a broad range of expertise, and has representatives from the police, Children and Adult Safeguarding Boards, Social Services, and the Probation Service, which greatly assists its work and facilitates inter-agency communication. Other members include representatives from St Albans Cathedral, The lead safeguarding Bishop, and Archdeacon, the DSA, and two Parish Safeguarding Officers.

The function of the DSAP was recently examined by a DSAP working group to ensure compliance with the Terms of Reference and some minor changes have been made to ensure that this is the case.

The panel continue to meeting quarterly, which is largely in person. The safeguarding strategy and action plan are on the agenda every second meeting. Training remains an area under particular scrutiny to ensure that acceptable compliance figures are reached for the relevant roles. The overall figures over 2024 are very encouraging however there is still work to do in this important area. The introduction of the National Safeguarding Standards and Quality Assurance Framework, and their integration into the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard means that the Dashboard, more than ever, needs to be promoted as the software tool to use to hold and process safeguarding requirements.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST) staffing remains the same and is sufficient:

DSA. Full time

A/DSA. Full time

A/DSA. 0.6

Training Co-ordinator and Trainer. 0.6

Administrator. 0.6

DBS administrator. 0.6

There is one new member of staff since the last report. Erica Hayter has replaced Lesley Shrosbree as the DBS Administrator.

Safeguarding Policy Updates

A new Learning and Development Framework was published towards the end of 2024, detailing the learning changes required for each role. The changes have been moderate compared to previous changes of framework. The requirements and an overview of the new publication was promoted in a newsletter in December 2024. The requirements come into effect at the start of January 2025.

Training and Development

Training and compliance are always high on the agenda. There has been significant improvement through 2024, following steady improvement from the two previous years.

The focus in 2024 was on clergy, including clergy PTO, who hit 100% compliance in autumn 2024 for all modules, with regard for those individuals able to complete the modules. Although the 100% score cannot be achieved at all times, it does remain in the mid or high 90s and systems are in place to ensure that this will continue to be the case. Currently the few courses outstanding are those which are recently overdue and have been completed before.

The figure for Readers continues to rise steadily and this is the group where there will be concentrated effort in 2025. Currently, at the time of writing, 81% of Readers have completed all training modules. The expectation is that this will be comparable to the current clergy figure later in 2025.

Monitoring the training compliance figure for Parish Safeguarding Officers is the responsibility of the respective parish. The diocese has been encouraging PSOs to undertake all necessary modules and this figure is now up to 72% for those who have completed all their modules. It is a group with a steady turnover. The intention is to bring the numbers up into the mid 90 percentiles. The diocese are supporting parishes by holding data and proactively encouraging individuals to ensure their training is up to date.

The Senior Leadership module was presented in 2024 in two separate days, in May and December and was fully attended.

The Leadership module, which is delivered face to face by the diocesan trainer along with volunteer theologically educated facilitators and safeguarding trainers, has changed content for 2025. The new content is based on the National Standards and all five standards are covered within the module. The process is made up of facilitated conversations and some practical work including a case study. The delivery is on the same formula as last year and this has shown to work well and is well received.

Safeguarding Casework

The National Case Management System was embedded in 2024 and is a useful addition to recording safeguarding concerns. The Cathedral and the diocese have a joint licence for their use of the system. The diocese is supported through an NCMS User Group. The Diocese and National Safeguarding Team are able to extract statistical data from this software.

There were seven serious safeguarding submissions to the Charity Commission in 2024.

Safer Recruitment to diocesan appointed roles, or parish roles through diocesan processes.

The following figures relate to individuals safely recruited to a role within St Albans Diocese:

Clergy appointments (Hertford and St Albans Archdeaonries):

St Albans Archdeaconry (14)

- 4 clergy appointed from outside the diocese – all completed clergy application forms & Confidential Declaration forms, CCSLs and 3 references obtained ahead of interviews, new DBS and mandatory safeguarding training undertaken ahead of licensing. All were formally interviewed for their posts
- 8 clergy already in the diocese appointed to new posts in the diocese – all completed clergy application forms & Confidential Declaration forms, 3 references obtained ahead of interviews, DBS (if due for renewal) and mandatory safeguarding training undertaken ahead of licensing. All were formally interviewed for their posts
- 2 Curates appointed to Title Posts – DBS and safeguarding training undertaken ahead of being deaconed/priested and compliant with Vocations safer recruitment requirements

Hertford Archdeaconry (13)

- 4 clergy appointed from outside the diocese – all completed clergy application forms & Confidential Declaration forms, CCSLs and 3 references obtained ahead of interviews, new DBS and mandatory safeguarding training undertaken ahead of any licensing. All were formally interviewed for their posts
- 6 clergy already in the diocese appointed to new posts in the diocese – all completed clergy application forms & Confidential Declaration forms, 3 references obtained ahead of interviews, DBS (if due for renewal) and mandatory safeguarding training undertaken ahead of any licensing. All were formally interviewed for their posts
- 2 Curates appointed to Title Posts – DBS and safeguarding training undertaken ahead of being deaconed and compliant with Vocations safer recruitment requirements
- 1 moved from PtO to being licenced – New DBS obtained and mandatory safeguarding training undertaken before licenced alongside Overseas Permission to Officiate. Application, 3 references and formal interview undertaken ahead of offer of post being made.

Bedford Archdeaconry (11)

- 8 clergy appointed from outside or within the diocese. With the outside route, there is a requirement for completed clergy application forms and Confidential Declaration forms, CCSLs and 3 references obtained ahead of interviews, new DBS and mandatory safeguarding training undertaken ahead of any licensing, and to be formally interviewed for their posts. From the route within, there is a requirement for all to have completed clergy application forms and Confidential Declaration forms, 3 references obtained ahead of interviews, DBS (if due for renewal) and mandatory safeguarding training undertaken ahead of any licensing, and to be formally interviewed for their posts
- 3 Curates appointed to Title Posts – DBS and safeguarding training undertaken ahead of being deaconed and compliant with Vocations safer recruitment requirements

Permission to Officiate appointments across the diocese

There were 50 Permissions to Officiate (PtO) issued in 2024 and of those, 11 were new and 39 were renewals.

The process for new PtOs involves an application form, DBS and safeguarding training completed, CCSL where applicable and commendation by a member of senior staff.

PtO is granted generally for 5 years or on an annual renewal for those over the age of 80 (in accordance with national guidelines).

The diocese are also now almost a year into the new system for PtO accountability.

Readers (Bedford, Hertford and St Albans):

- 8 Readers in training (all started Sept 2024) – all are required to undertake DBS and safeguarding training as soon as training commences.
- 2 Licenced Readers transferred to the diocese and were licenced in Sept 2024 – ahead of licensing, a Safe to Receive (reference) from their current diocese is sought and they are required to have new DBS and be up to date with safeguarding training before a licence is given.

Enhanced Safeguarding Reporting to Diocesan Governance Bodies

Following the Makin Review and the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury on 18/11/2024 David White, Diocesan Secretary proposed to create a framework for enhanced reporting on safeguarding to Diocesan Synod, Bishop's Council and the DBF. The below was agreed at the Bishop's Staff meeting in December 2024:

Diocesan Synod

June Annual Safeguarding Report, Presentation and Questions (intended as a session of up to 20 minutes)

Bishop's Council

Single page report from DSA at each meeting plus additional items:

January	Safeguarding Plan for year including training programme
April	Annual Safeguarding Report - to be presented by DSAP Chair and DSA
July	Case Study
October	Independent Audit (November 2027) Preparation Report

Diocesan Board of Finance

Single page report from DSA at each meeting plus additional items:

January	Safeguarding Plan for year including training programme
February	-
May	Annual Safeguarding Report - to be presented by DSAP Chair and DSA
July	Case Study
September	-
November	Independent Audit (November 2027) Preparation Report

New safeguarding matters

As and when new safeguarding matters arise (outside of casework) these will be reported to the subsequent Bishop's Council and DBF, For example any significant changes to safeguarding structures resulting from the Jay Review would need to be understood and discussed by Bishop's Council, the DBF and, subsequently, Synod.

The INEQ Safeguarding Audit

An audit group is to be set up in early 2025 to identify any areas for improvement at an early stage and make changes. This will include examining the audits already completed in other dioceses. The date for St Albans Diocese audit is November 2027. Further, the diocese is undertaking a six-monthly self-audit of each of the National Standards in turn, to determine good and poor practice and drive change.

National Safeguarding Standards

The standards are the hub of safeguarding within the church and reference is drawn from them at every turn. They form the basis of the new safeguarding leadership module. The forthcoming independent audit is structured around them. There is encouragement for self-examination by parishes and the diocese around the standards, every six months. They are now incorporated within the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard.

Parish Support

The DST remain committed to supporting parishes so that they can achieve the six policy commitments from the national policy, Promoting a Safer Church.

Parish Safeguarding Dashboard and the Safeguarding Hub have had tremendous support from PSOs and Clergy and there is great encouragement given to those parishes who are not yet using these systems.

The monthly Zoom drop ins are also a very popular way for PSOs to keep in touch with members of the DST and each other and give a sense of belonging to a group as opposed to being a lone voice.

The annual safeguarding forums will take place again in the first half of 2025.

PSOs have been invited to evensong in May 2025 to thank them for their services.

Although the take up on the Dashboard is 85%, and the DST have an oversight, it is still difficult to determine the overall safeguarding picture on the diocese, as there are 15% of parishes not using the system, and there is no way of knowing if each parish is keeping the dashboard up to date.

The Archdeacons' questionnaires are being refocussed this year after a poor parish response in 2024. There will be no chasing up missing 2024 responses, but instead, questionnaires for 2025 have been circulated in January rather than May, with intensive follow up in at the latest in July, August and September. It is hoped that with full responses, a reasonable overall safeguarding picture will be available.

Safeguarding at St Albans Cathedral

The Cathedral Safeguarding Committee oversee safeguarding within the Cathedral and continue to employ a part time Cathedral Safeguarding Officer (CSO). Safeguarding at the Cathedral is held in high status. The Dean, the Canon for Mission and Pastoral Care, and the CSO are enthusiastic, and work well together within and outside the Committee to ensure compliance, and safer environments for all. The DSA continues as a member of the Committee and the Canon for Mission and Pastoral Care and CSO are members of the DSAP. There are regular meetings outside these formal ones and a good relationship remains, which assists a positive safeguarding culture. The Cathedral will also be subject to independent audit in November 2027.

The National Picture

The recent publication of the Makin Report and the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury have prompted deep reflection across the Church. These events highlight the urgent need to address past failures with honesty and humility while reaffirming our unwavering commitment to safeguarding. The Makin Report exposed significant shortcomings in the handling of abuse allegations within the Church, particularly concerning the experiences of survivors. These findings serve as a sobering reminder that safeguarding is not optional—it is essential. The report calls for better listening, with a renewed focus on hearing and acting upon the voices of survivors. It calls for transparency, with clear processes for responding to allegations, free from institutional defensiveness, and it calls for accountability, to ensure that safeguarding practices are consistent, robust, and implemented across every parish.

The resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury marks a pivotal moment for the Church. While leadership changes can bring uncertainty, they also provide an opportunity to reaffirm responsibility. Safeguarding does not rest on any single leader—it is a shared responsibility that involves every member of a church community.

In February 2024, Professor Alexis Jay published the "Future of Church Safeguarding" report, recommending a comprehensive overhaul of the Church of England's safeguarding structures. The report proposed establishing two independent charities: one to manage operational safeguarding and another to provide scrutiny, thereby removing safeguarding responsibilities from individual dioceses. The General Synod convened to discuss the report's findings. Members agreed to engage in a consultation phase involving the entire Church, including victims and survivors, through a designated Response Group. This group was tasked with consulting widely and considering existing efforts to improve safeguarding structures before implementing any radical changes. As of January 2025, the Church of England is in the process of engaging with the Jay report's recommendations, consulting widely to determine the most effective approach to reforming its safeguarding practices. The General Synod has not yet made final decisions regarding the implementation of the proposed independent safeguarding bodies.

The Scolding KC review.

The independent review into the culture and practices of Soul Survivor, following the National Safeguarding Team's investigation into Mike Pilavachi was published in September 2024. The report made recommendations for learning for the church, the diocese, and the national church. The diocese responded in December, publishing an action plan which is detailed, well considered and is positive in regard to making changes where better practice has been identified. Despite the gruelling investigation by the diocese and NST, the DST have since worked with the church

and advised on the implementation of robust safeguarding practices and have a good working relationship with the leaders and safeguarding officers.

Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse

IICSA 1 and 8 recommendations for the Church of England will come into effect early in 2025 for St Albans Diocese. The changes will encompass the following:

Each region will be overseen by a Regional Safeguarding Lead.

The East Anglia region includes dioceses and cathedrals in:

Chelmsford

Ely

Norwich

St Albans

St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Each region must have one Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO), an experienced safeguarding professional who will have authority to make decisions independently of the Diocesan Bishop on key safeguarding tasks. The work of the DSO must be supervised and quality assured by the National Safeguarding Team.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Now, more than ever, we must acknowledge the critical role safeguarding plays within the dioceses, parishes, chaplaincies and the Cathedral. It is evident that ensuring the safety and well-being of all individuals within the Church cannot just be a legal or procedural obligation but also a reflection of Christian theology. It is imperative that the Church not only addresses structural and procedural deficiencies but also creates a culture where every individual feels safe, valued, and empowered to speak out against harm. While strides have been made in recent years, to establish frameworks, policies, and robust mechanisms, the implementation of these measures must be continually evaluated and improved to meet the evolving challenges of safeguarding. In particular, the voices and experiences of survivors must be heard, ensuring that they guide and inform practices at every level. Their courage and resilience are reminders of the profound impact of safeguarding failures.

The DSAP will ensure oversight of the commitment to safeguarding by St Albans Diocese and the ongoing need for vigilance, support, and resources.

Report approved at DSAP on 21st January 2025.

Mary Moroney – Independent Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP)