

Diocese of Bristol
TRANSFORMING CHURCH.
TOGETHER.

2024

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL


INDEPENDENT SAFEGUARDING AUDIT REPORT

RESPONSE



The audit engaged a total of **457** individuals through various methods, including one-to-one discussions, focus groups, online surveys, and confidential interviews.

Audit engagement and analysis

302  documents collated and analysed prior to fieldwork.

377 anonymous survey responses were collected from victims and survivors, children and young people, and those worshipping or working within the parishes, the Cathedral, and for the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF).

Focus groups took place with:

9 choristers



6 chorister parents



30 staff and volunteers



9,100

regular worshippers actively engaged with us through Sunday attendance and other regular activities in 2022.



The Diocese serves a population exceeding **1 million** people, with over **200** churches and approximately **18,000** worshippers.



15,000 children and young people are educated in church schools within the Diocese. **72** 

NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS



1. 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.

2. PREVENTION

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

3. 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 working.

4. 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.

5. 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.

Read more about the National Safeguarding Standards

churchofengland.org/safeguarding/national-safeguarding-standards



A message from our leaders

The independent safeguarding audit programme for the Church of England (CofE) was commissioned by the Archbishops' Council and is overseen by the CofE's National Safeguarding Team (NST).

Led by the INEQE Safeguarding Group, the audits test the sufficiency of safeguarding arrangements within CofE Dioceses and Cathedrals against the National Safeguarding Standards. We were pleased to take an early part in this intensive and thorough process, which identified the robustness of safeguarding practices in our Diocese, alongside a strong commitment to safeguarding from our senior clergy and other senior leaders.

The Bishop and Dean lead by example and are a formidable team. Each of them is committed to doing whatever is necessary to create a safer, more open and welcoming Church.



Continued...

Through our continued commitment and diligence, it has been recognised by INEQE that the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) and Cathedral are well led, with a 'coherent and tangible focus on safeguarding', which is 'paying dividends, with a high level of confidence that a safeguarding culture is now embedded'.

“

The Diocese and Cathedral's greatest asset is to be found in the highly experienced and dedicated Safeguarding Team. A group of professionals, deliberately built and blended to replicate a multi-agency team, they are undoubtedly the foundation upon which Bristol's improvement journey has been built.

”

We are pleased to see the recognition of the DBF Safeguarding Team holding strong relationships with statutory partners, such as the Local Authority Designated Officer(s) (LADO). We are also happy with the credit given to the Cathedral Safeguarding team, clergy, and music department for their support of Cathedral choristers. Governance and oversight across the DBF, Diocesan Safeguarding Steering Group (DSSG), and Cathedral are improving, with a growing openness to scrutiny and independent challenge.

The Dean has publicly committed to open the Cathedral up to everyone and her drive and ambition for the Cathedral is evident in her relentless commitment to address key contemporary and historic issues.

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Welcoming feedback

We equally welcome aspects of the report that show ways we can further strengthen our approach to safeguarding.

The Diocesan Bishop, Suffragan Bishop, Dean, Diocesan Secretary and Cathedral Chief Operating Officer hold a clear dedication to fostering a safer, more open, and welcoming church environment. We do, however, recognise that rebuilding trust with victims of historic abuse will take time.

From Triennial Inspections to our recruitment practices, staff training and pastoral care, the internal work and due diligence that continue across the Diocese have been recognised alongside improved safeguarding practices.

The Audit observed a firm leadership focus on safeguarding and saw evidence that steps had been taken to reinforce policy and practice and to address Church-based abuse past and present.

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From the Bishop and Dean to the Mission and Ministry teams, the Audit saw evidence of an unequivocal, safeguarding first approach aimed at making people safer.

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Next steps

In the coming months, we will look to develop and implement further practices, which will continue to improve our robust safeguarding measures.



Amongst others, some of the recommendations we will be exploring are bi-annual safeguarding cultural audits to gather more regular feedback and expand on our existing unconscious bias work with more frequent training and facilitated sessions throughout the year.

Both the Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Steering Group (DSSG) and the Diocesan Bishop welcome the suggestion of meeting quarterly with relevant statutory partners. It is hoped that this will encourage external representatives from the wider community to be active members of steering group meetings.

Our next steps will look to ensure that our safeguarding processes are woven into everything we do, from our digital communications through to regular audits. A joint safeguarding improvement plan is in place, overseen by the DSSG. We also aim to highlight the importance of safeguarding through specific campaigns. A comms plan has been developed alongside a Digital Safeguarding Strategy, which will highlight the commitment to raising awareness of important safeguarding procedures and protecting those that use our church spaces and communities.

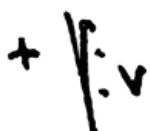
Our values and commitment

It is central to our ethos and values of openness and generosity that all Church bodies create supportive conditions that build confidence amongst victims and survivors. We want them to feel that they will be heard, taken seriously, as outlined in our Survivor Support Strategy 2023. The document highlights key priorities from a range of issues covering engagement and response to specific cases.

The (Diocesan) Bishop leads by example and has led on the work to build a welcoming and inclusive environment.

We are encouraged by the largely positive conclusions of this Audit. That said, we are not complacent, and we recognise that we must remain vigilant, and always strive to improve. We pay tribute to committed and hard-working Parish Safeguarding Officers across the diocese and do not underestimate the challenges they face on the frontline.

Our dedication to safeguarding is not simply defined by our statutory responsibility but underpinned by the compelling theological themes that run through Scripture: care for the vulnerable, challenging unhealthy power dynamics, and unflinching honesty about our own nature. Through our continued dedication and maintaining the priority of this crucial area of work, we aim to ensure that the well-being of children, young people and vulnerable adults remains well protected, and that every person has the opportunity to flourish in our church communities.



The Rt Revd Vivienne Faull
Bishop of Bristol



The Very Revd Mandy Ford
Dean of Bristol

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