

Audit praises change in our safeguarding

INDEPENDENT auditors have praised the “substantial and positive transformation in the safeguarding culture” of our diocese.

An audit report, by independent organisation INEQE Safeguarding Group, also praised the “considerable advancements” in the safeguarding culture at Portsmouth Cathedral.

Auditors examined 360 documents, received 642 anonymous surveys, interviewed 130 people, and held six focus groups during the audit. The process began earlier this year and included a week-long visit in June. It is part of a series of audits by INEQE across the whole of the Church of England.

Their report recognises the enormous changes that have taken place in both the diocese and the cathedral over recent years, including the recruitment of a diocesan Head of Safeguarding and an experienced professional team, who have put into place appropriate policies and training programmes.

Its wide-ranging survey indicates an overwhelming majority of respondents – inside and outside the Church – recognise these improvements, believe that a robust safeguarding culture has been established, and express confidence that they could raise concerns.

And its report recognises that the diocese gives safeguarding the highest priority, largely because of the clear and committed leadership of our bishop, Bishop Jonathan. It



Bishop Jonathan has taken the lead on safeguarding issues

described him as “an exemplar” on this issue.

The report said: “His unwavering commitment, explicit prioritisation of, and tangible investment in safeguarding have played a crucial role in integrating safeguarding principles throughout the diocese’s operational and spiritual fabric.”

The report also recognises the hard work of the network of Parish Safeguarding Officers – volunteers in each parish church on the frontline of making sure that children, young people and vulnerable adults are kept safe during church activities. It praised the diocese for organising annual Safeguarding Conferences to sharpen development in this area.

It also praised the cathedral for the “strong set of preventative measures” it had put in place, and the positive safeguarding

culture around choristers, who are supported by experienced staff, consistent supervision, and strong pastoral awareness.

The INEQE report also includes a number of recommendations to help both the diocese and the cathedral to improve further.

Bishop Jonathan said: “I’m pleased that the report’s conclusion is that there has been this transformation in safeguarding culture, but we will not be complacent. We always have more to learn.

“I want to pay tribute to our Head of Safeguarding, Emily Hassan, and our dedicated diocesan safeguarding team, which includes those with substantial experience in social services, the police and other statutory agencies – as well as our network of Parish Safeguarding Officers. They have enabled this transformation.

“This report recognises that we give safeguarding the highest priority – we need to get that right before we do anything else. And that’s not just a one-off, that’s an ongoing process to make sure we listen carefully to the voice of survivors and we continue to change our culture as needs be.

“It also sets out recommendations to help us continue to strengthen our approach. We are committed to taking these forward. Some recommendations have already begun following their visit and some will need further exploration. That means you can feel confident about joining in our toddler groups, our Sunday services, and our youth groups.

“I want to thank all those who took part in this audit. And I can assure you that we will not rest on our laurels in this diocese and in our cathedral. We will do all we can to make sure the Church of England in this area gives safeguarding the priority it deserves.”

The Dean of Portsmouth, the Very Rev Anthony Cane, said: “I welcome the publication of the INEQE safeguarding audit, and am deeply grateful for the thorough and constructive way in which it has been carried out. It is heartening to see the many strengths identified in our current safeguarding practice, and we thank all those whose dedication and vigilance have helped bring us to this point.

“At the same time, we recognise with humility that the report makes a number of important recommendations. We accept these fully and are committed to addressing them promptly and transparently. Safeguarding is never a task completed, but an ongoing responsibility – one that lies at the heart of our calling as a cathedral community.”

You can read the full audit on www.portsmouth.anglican.org/safeguarding/audit



Dr Kathryn Whyte at the Safeguarding Conference in St Luke’s, Southsea

Conference examines aspects of trauma

OUR diocese’s latest Safeguarding Conference examined the issue of trauma – and how to develop a trauma-informed Church.

Dozens of parish safeguarding officers, clergy and other church staff attended our fourth annual Safeguarding Conference, at St Luke’s Church, Southsea.

They heard from speakers about what trauma is, why it matters, and about the theology of trauma.

Delegates heard from from Dr Kathryn Whyte, clinical psychologist at Beacon House therapeutic services in Chichester. She explained about different types of trauma, including pre-birth events, developmental trauma, post-traumatic stress, complex trauma, marginalisation and religious trauma.

Kathryn said a trauma-informed approach by family, society and church can all help recovery. What can help is a safe, predictable, consistent environment, where someone doesn’t feel judged and knows they are loved.

Delegates also heard

from Joanna Douglas, an SEMH school teacher who is studying for a PhD in the theology of trauma. She talked about *Imago Dei*, the idea that humankind is made in the image of God, which is fundamental to our sense of identity. For those who have suffered trauma and feel broken, it is often difficult to imagine how that broken self can really be made in the image of a perfect God.

Among the other speakers were Mandy Wiltshire and Chris West from Solent Mind, who talked about aspects of mental health and personal wellbeing.

Angela Etherington, a mental health consultant and Parish Safeguarding Officer, helped us to understand personality disorders. And Bishop Jonathan rounded off the day with some reflections on theology and politics.

The conference also included stands from charities and support organisations that can help our churches to help others. For details, see: www.portsmouth.anglican.org/safeguarding/conference