


Independent Audit of Safeguarding

OUR RESPONSE

 **Diocese
of Portsmouth**
Jesus-centred, Kingdom-seeking


**PORTSMOUTH
CATHEDRAL**



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SAFEGUARDING AUDIT 2025

In June 2025, safeguarding in the Diocese of Portsmouth and Portsmouth Cathedral was independently audited as part of a nationwide programme across the whole Church of England. Find out more at portsmouth.anglican.org/safeguarding/audit.

More than **360**
documents analysed

The Diocese of Portsmouth
serves a population of
792,345 people

642 anonymous
survey responses received,
from those inside and
outside the Church

It encompasses **129**
parishes and **168** churches

It is led by **149**
licensed clergy

6 focus groups

There are **38** Church
schools and **5** academies

130 people
interviewed

The diocese currently counts
12,921
individuals in its
worshipping community

“The audit findings reflect a **substantial and positive transformation** in the safeguarding culture across the diocese, directly attributable to concerted efforts to embed safeguarding principles as a core cultural tenet.”



INTRODUCTION

Every diocese and cathedral in England is being audited as part of an independent safeguarding audit programme for the Church of England. Commissioned by the Archbishops' Council and overseen by the Church of England's National Safeguarding Team (NST), the programme began in 2023 and will take five years to complete.

WHO ARE THE INDEPENDENT AUDITORS?

As one of the largest organisations of its type in the UK and Ireland, INEQE Safeguarding Group delivers a wide range of contemporary, credible, and relevant safeguarding services. INEQE have developed a strong reputation for conducting high quality and complex safeguarding reviews and audits with the primary aim of helping organisations reflect, learn, and improve, so they are better able to address the specific safeguarding risks they face. You can find out more about INEQE and their approach to the audits at ineqe.com/churchofengland.





WHAT DID THE AUDIT INVOLVE?

In compiling the report, the auditors took into account the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) audits, Past Cases Review 2 (PCR2) outcomes, as well as evidence from surveys, focus groups, direct correspondence and interviews.

WHAT DID THEY LOOK INTO?

The auditors looked into: culture, leadership and capacity; prevention; recognising, assessing and managing risk; victims and survivors and learning, supervision and support.

WHO WAS ASKED TO SHARE THEIR VIEWS WITH THE AUDITORS?

A wide range of individuals including victims and survivors of abuse, staff, clergy, church worshippers, as well as children and young people. This was done using online questionnaires, tailored to their connection to the diocese, church or cathedral, as well as focus groups and interviews.

“Independent survey data indicates an overwhelming majority of respondents from the DBF and parish workforces, as well as the broader parish community, have reported significant improvements in their safeguarding arrangements.”

Find out more about the Church of England’s programme of independent safeguarding audits, and all reports published to date on [churchofengland.org/safeguarding/reviews-and-reports](https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/reviews-and-reports).



RESPONSE

FROM THE BISHOP OF PORTSMOUTH, THE RT REV JONATHAN FROST

“The Diocesan Bishop holds ultimate accountability for safeguarding, a responsibility he has fully embraced. Feedback from focus groups, one to one discussions and access survey and other material reinforces the audit’s view that it defines his leadership. He integrates safeguarding into his areas of responsibility by using every opportunity to reinforce its importance. He leads by example and pushes beyond well-intentioned rhetoric to deliver demonstrable acts of support and investment. The audit has found him to be an exemplar in this regard.”

This report recognises the enormous changes that have taken place in this diocese and cathedral over recent years, including the recruitment of a Head of Safeguarding and an experienced, professional team, who have put in place the right policies and training.



THE RT REV JONATHAN FROST,
BISHOP OF PORTSMOUTH

It also recognises the hard work of our network of Parish Safeguarding Officers – a specific person in each of our churches who is on the frontline of making sure our children, young people and vulnerable adults are kept safe. That means



you can feel confident about joining in our toddler groups, our Sunday services, our youth groups and our church school activities.

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 any concerns, we give survivors a voice, and we continue to change our culture as needs be.

The report 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. Do read the report for yourself on our website.

And I can assure you that we will not be complacent 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.



RESPONSE

FROM THE DEAN OF PORTSMOUTH, THE VERY REV ANTHONY CANE

“The cathedral has made considerable advancements in its safeguarding arrangements, enabling a more embedded safeguarding culture that is largely recognised by both its workforce (staff and volunteers) and worshipping community.”

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.



THE VERY REV ANTHONY CANE,
DEAN OF PORTSMOUTH

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.

Above all, our first priority remains the safety and flourishing of every person who comes through our doors.

AREAS AUDITED IN PORTSMOUTH DIOCESE



In line with the national safeguarding standards for the Church of England, the audit considered five different areas, details of which can be found on the Church of England website here: [churchofengland.org/safeguarding/national-safeguarding-standards](https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/national-safeguarding-standards).

A selection of the feedback in each of these areas is below:

1. CULTURE, LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY

“The bishop’s 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 diocesan safeguarding officer (Head of Safeguarding) is an asset to the entire diocese, and their future development should be grasped.”

“The diocesan safeguarding team is well-managed, sensibly structured and staffed by credible safeguarding professionals.”

2. PREVENTION

“Good safeguarding practices are developed, adapted and shared throughout the diocese, and there is evidence of adherence to the House of Bishops’ Safeguarding Policy”

“The DBF employs various methods to promote safeguarding and ensure relevant materials are accessible to all audiences.”

3. ASSESSING AND MANAGING RISK

“The diocesan safeguarding team operates a structured duty rota system to ensure the efficient management of safeguarding concerns.”

“The DBF has a clearly defined process for the review and ongoing monitoring of Church Safety Plans.”



4. VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS

“The audit observed a clear commitment to supporting victims and survivors through their disclosures, with effective assistance evident both within and beyond diocesan boundaries.”

“The bishop’s public statement concerning the publication of the Makin Review helps to reinforce a culture of vigilance and accountability.”

5. LEARNING, SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT

“Safeguarding learning across the whole diocese is a clear priority. It is underpinned by a comprehensive three-year training strategy . . . supported by a detailed training needs analysis which informs course planning and deployment.”



AREAS AUDITED IN PORTSMOUTH CATHEDRAL



1. CULTURE, LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY

“There is clear acknowledgement of improved safeguarding arrangements across the cathedral, where a significant majority of the workforce reported observing enhancements, a sentiment mirrored by the worshipping community.”

“There is a positive safeguarding culture around the choristers at Portsmouth Cathedral.”

“Staff appear knowledgeable and committed, with safeguarding embedded into day-to-day routines. Parents expressed high levels of trust in the cathedral’s safeguarding arrangements.”

2. PREVENTION

“The cathedral has a strong set of preventative measures as part of its safeguarding arrangements. Meaningful and appropriate discussions about safeguarding take place regularly across various levels of the organisation.”

3. RECOGNISING, ASSESSING AND MANAGING RISK

“The effective triaging of safeguarding referrals within the cathedral is a structured process. All concerns are channelled to a specific individual responsible for their initial assessment and subsequent management.”

4. VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS

“Portsmouth Cathedral has clear and accessible reporting pathways, which are outlined on the cathedral’s website and within its Safeguarding Police Handbook. The cathedral signposts a comprehensive range of external support services.”

5. LEARNING, SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT

“Staff and volunteers describe safeguarding training as relevant, well-communicated and increasingly embedded in day-to-day practice.”



RESPONSE FROM EMILY HASSAN, HEAD OF SAFEGUARDING

This audit provides an important external assessment of our safeguarding arrangements, highlighting the progress we have made in recent years and affirming that safeguarding is central to diocesan life. We recognise that this national audit programme follows past safeguarding reviews, including the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) and Past Cases Review 2 (PCR2), and reflects the Church's commitment to continue learning and improvement.



**EMILY HASSAN,
HEAD OF SAFEGUARDING**

The report recognises the transformation in our safeguarding culture, the committed and effective leadership of the bishop and senior leadership team, and the professionalism and dedication of our Diocesan Safeguarding Team. It confirms that our safeguarding arrangements are strong and effective, providing a solid foundation to protect children, young people, and adults at risk. It also highlights the support we provide to victims and survivors, and the ongoing work across the diocese to prioritise safeguarding in governance, training, and pastoral care.



I'd like to personally thank everyone who contributed to this audit: survivors who courageously shared their experiences, our Parish Safeguarding Officers, clergy, staff, volunteers, and colleagues across the diocese. I also thank the auditors from INEQE for their professional and thorough work. Safeguarding is a shared responsibility, and it is the dedication of so many that has created a culture within which people report that they feel safe, supported, and heard. The voices of survivors continue to guide and shape how we work.

The audit includes recommendations, which we welcome and will incorporate into our ongoing safeguarding strategy and planning. The real and lasting difference will come from the changes we put into practice.

Safeguarding is never static. This report marks an important milestone, but the journey continues. Together with our team and colleagues across the diocese, we remain committed to ensuring that everyone who comes into contact with our churches and communities experiences an environment that is respectful, welcoming and safe.



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH

1. Appoint a suffragan bishop to support the diocesan bishop.
2. The archdeacon's role should be enhanced and supported by a strengthened framework for both formal and informal parish visits, alongside key improvements to core group meeting procedures.
3. Archdeacons should receive specific training on effectively chairing core group meetings.
4. A programme of work should be established for the diocesan safeguarding officer (Head of Safeguarding) to build upon their existing leadership experience.
5. The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) should:
 - a. Diversify its membership.
 - b. Proactively reach out to victim and survivor support groups.
 - c. Develop structured, data-driven frameworks for insight and oversight.
 - d. Implement a cyclical approach to provide in-depth reviews of specific safeguarding areas.
 - e. Enhance relationships through one-to-one meetings with key statutory lead.
 - f. Strengthen oversight through practice audits and risk registers.
 - g. Reinforce the independence and demonstrable impact of the DSAP's scrutiny functions.



6. The DBF should
 - a. Introduce a robust system for tracking who accesses Blue Files, when, and for what purpose.
 - b. Develop and enforce the consistent use of comprehensive content sheets for each file.
 - c. Ensure relevant and up-to-date MDRs are promptly included in the respective Blue Files.
 - d. Implement a formal policy and procedure for identifying and managing duplicate documents and loose papers within the files.
 - e. Revise the current review process to include review on receipt or prior to dissemination to another area, examination of incoming and outgoing Blue Files by the DSO.
 - f. Invest in and install suitable fireproof cabinets for the storage of all Blue Files.
7. Create a single, unified director of safeguarding, and appoint a suitably qualified Director of Safeguarding to lead it.
8. Appoint a part-time parish safeguarding co-ordinator on the Isle of Wight, and outsource the DBS processing from the safeguarding team to whoever is responsible for administration within the diocese.



9. Transfer DBS administration from the diocesan safeguarding team to the HR team
10. Define and adopt a parish dashboard quality assurance process.
11. Develop engagement mechanisms to consider the needs, experiences and voices of children, vulnerable adults and survivors within safeguarding prevention planning.
12. The DSAP should develop a standalone operational safeguarding Risk Register to allow for more focussed scrutiny on the full range of safeguarding concerns.
13. DSA decisions on all cases triaged by the safeguarding team should be approved by the Head of Safeguarding or Deputy DSO.
14. The safeguarding team should move to a system of direct worker allocation that functions around defined timescales.
15. Signpost directly to the 'Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse' section of the safeguarding e-manual.
16. Expand the signposting to support services to include a broader range of local organisations.
17. Establish more structured and diarised check-in points with victims/survivors.
18. Actively include the cathedral as a location within its strategic plans for establishing dedicated groups and projects.
19. Continue to provide access to training and expert input for those working with individuals subject to safeguarding agreements or Safety Plans.
20. Review and revise the title of the Lead Safeguarding Trainer to reflect the strategic and supervisory scope of the role.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS



PORTSMOUTH CATHEDRAL

1. Adopt a proportionate approach to provide pathways for staff engagement and for cathedral leaders to reflect on how these persistent issues can be resolved.
2. Appoint a Cathedral Safeguarding Adviser, situated within the cathedral but professionally managed by the DSO.
3. Evaluate the viability of providing vergers and maintenance activities via shared oversight after six to nine months.
4. Enhance the cathedral's governance oversight framework by:
 - a. Reviewing and restructuring existing committees and sub-committees to facilitate a robust 'bottom-up' scrutiny process.
 - b. Revising and aligning scrutiny, agenda and reporting timelines to ensure timely and effective flow of information.
 - c. Adopting a rolling programme where Chapter members formally attend events, visit teams and host staff/volunteer clinics to build meaningful relationships.
 - d. Enhancing the Safeguarding Management Group, to be chaired by a suitably qualified expert.
 - e. Implement a Safeguarding Oversight Group (SOG) to reinforce day-to-day operational oversight.
 - f. Fully utilise the Senior Non-Executive Member (SNEM) to embed independent oversight and challenge within Chapter.
5. Create a single unified Directorate of Safeguarding in the diocese (as above).
6. Develop contingency planning for staff absence or transition.
7. Ensure a safeguarding agreement is in place with every school attended by a current chorister.



8. Develop a consistent approach to raising awareness of chorister commitments among school staff.
9. Review and formalise its policy on chorister mobile phone use during residential trips, rehearsals, services and events.
10. Issue clear guidance on unofficial social media activity linked to cathedral choristers.
11. Review its records for DBS checks to ensure no staff/ volunteers miss the requirement for three-yearly re-checks.
12. Expand CCTV coverage across the site.
13. The partnership agreement between the cathedral and DBF should be updated to incorporate protocols to address differences in opinion about safeguarding cases/issues
14. Enhance its 'safeguarding' web page by creating a dedicated, easily visible sub-section for victims/survivors.
15. Evaluate the impact of safeguarding leaning.
16. Include safeguarding as a standing item within MDRs.

SAFEGUARDING WITHIN THE DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH

“The diocesan safeguarding team’s proactive approach has notably strengthened the local safeguarding framework, addressing historical challenges and – supported by the wider DBF leadership team – they have driven real change.”

The diocesan safeguarding team is led by Head of Safeguarding Emily Hassan (also officially known as the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer), who is independent of the bishop and provides professional leadership on and management of all matters relating to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.



The team includes safeguarding advisers with backgrounds in social work, the police and statutory services. It includes four safeguarding advisers (one of whom is also the deputy DSO), a lead safeguarding trainer, and two safeguarding co-ordinators.



This team of experts is available to help you with any safeguarding concerns you have. They can be contacted during officer hours, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm on safeguarding@portsmouth.anglican.org or 023 9289 9665.

Out of hours advice can be obtained from the independent safeguarding organisation *thirtyone:eight* on 0303 003 1111, selecting option 2.

A full programme of safeguarding training is available to ensure that all church officers are aware of their responsibilities and have the core skills and knowledge to protect children and/or adults from harm. Find out more on portsmouth.anglican.org/safeguarding/training.

Each of our parishes includes a Parish Safeguarding Officer, who play a vital role at the frontline. Their role includes safely recruiting volunteers for church activities, ensuring that safeguarding training is up-to-date for paid staff and volunteers in their parish, and dealing with any safeguarding issues that arise.

Find out more about how safeguarding works in the Diocese of Portsmouth on portsmouth.anglican.org/safeguarding.

DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING ADVISORY PANEL

The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) works in partnership with the Bishop's Staff and the diocesan safeguarding team in offering strategy, policy and practice advice and support to the Diocese.

DSAP members are appointed by the Bishop and include professionals with expertise and current experience in the strategic overview and practices regarding the safeguarding of children and adults.

It is chaired by an independent person, Kevin Ball, who is an associate consultant for the NSPCC and associate consultant for Barnardo's. He is also an independent expert panel member the Church of England's National Safeguarding Panel, and was the independent lead reviewer for the Diocese of London's Past Cases Review (PCR2).

If you are not happy with how a safeguarding issue has been dealt with, or cannot resolve an issue with the diocesan safeguarding team, you can raise the issue with Kevin Ball, contacting him c/o Diocese of Portsmouth, First Floor, Peninsular House, Wharf Road, PO2 8HB or on safeguarding@portsmouth.anglican.org.





REPORTING A CONCERN

If you have information about a safeguarding situation where a child or adult is in immediate danger, or requires immediate attention, call emergency services on 999.

Parish safeguarding concerns should be reported to the diocesan safeguarding team on 023 9289 9665 or safeguarding@portsmouth.anglican.org, or by using the form on portsmouth.anglican.org/safeguarding/report-concern.

The diocese has commissioned thirtyone:eight to offer out of hours and holiday cover when the diocesan safeguarding team are unavailable. They can be contacted on 0303 003 1111. The diocesan safeguarding team will receive a copy of the advice that thirtyone:eight may offer you, to ensure appropriate follow up and support. Please make sure when contacting thirtyone:eight that you inform them that you are calling from the Diocese of Portsmouth.

Below are the contact details of other agencies that are available to assist either on a 24-hour basis or through specialist helplines and services:

PORTSMOUTH

- Portsmouth Safeguarding Children – portsmouthscp.org.uk
- Portsmouth Safeguarding Adults – portsmouthsab.uk

HAMPSHIRE

- Hampshire Safeguarding Children – hampshirescp.org.uk
- Hampshire Safeguarding Adults – hampshiresab.org.uk

ISLE OF WIGHT

- Isle of Wight Safeguarding Children – iowscp.org.uk
- Isle of Wight Safeguarding Adult – iow.gov.uk/housing-and-adult-social-care/adult-social-care/adult-safeguarding/



OTHER

- [NSPCC Helpline](https://www.nspcc.org.uk) 0808 800 5000 (Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm) or email help@nspcc.org.uk at any time.
- [Child-line](https://www.child-line.org.uk): 0800 1111 (lines free and open 24 hours). Phone if you are a child or young person and are worried about anything.
- [National Domestic Violence Helpline](https://www.ndvh.org.uk): 0808 2000 247 (lines free and open 24 hours). Phone if you are experiencing domestic abuse.
- [Samaritans](https://www.samaritans.org): 08457 90 90 90 (open 24 hours). Phone if you feel you are struggling to cope and need someone to talk to.
- [Action on Elder Abuse](https://www.actiononelderabuse.org.uk): 080 8808 8141 (free phone Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm).
- [The Survivor's Trust](https://www.the-survivors-trust.org.uk): 08088 010 818 (free phone Monday to Wednesday 10am to 7:30pm, Thursday 10am to 6pm, Friday 10am to 2pm)

“Portsmouth DBF has undergone a substantial and positive transformation in its safeguarding culture, establishing a firmly embedded and robust framework. This success is primarily attributed to the diocesan bishop’s clear, committed, and effective leadership, which has strategically positioned safeguarding as a core theological concern and gospel imperative.”



**Diocese
of Portsmouth**

Jesus-centred, Kingdom-seeking

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**PORTSMOUTH
CATHEDRAL**

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portsmouthcathedral.org.uk

To read a full copy of the INEQE audit of safeguarding, see: portsmouth.anglican.org/safeguarding/audit or ineqe.com/churchofengland/portsmouth



**THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND**