

Independent Safeguarding Audit report response

July 2025





DIOCESE OF
Bath & Wells

Living and telling the story of Jesus

Safeguarding Audit 2025

In March 2025, safeguarding in the Diocese of Bath and Wells and Wells Cathedral were independently audited as part of a nationwide Church of England programme.

Find out more at bathandwells.org.uk/safeguarding-audit

670

anonymous survey responses received - from victims and survivors, children and young people, as well as worshippers, clergy, volunteers and staff.

370

documents analysed during the audit.

42

engagement sessions held, with

103

people.

35

interviews with church officers (staff and volunteers), external partners, victims and survivors, and other stakeholders.

“

Bath and Wells has developed a strong and positive safeguarding culture driven by committed leadership, engaged safeguarding personnel and effective strategies that personalise safeguarding and empower local communities.

”

We serve over **1million** people across our **493** parishes and our chaplaincies.

Our **182** church schools serve over **35,000** children and young people.

Report it

Got a safeguarding concern?

Find out how to report it at bathandwells.org.uk/report-it.

If it's an emergency call

999





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 commenced 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 www.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/ cathedral, as well as focus groups and interviews.

“Bath and Wells has developed a strong and positive safeguarding culture driven by committed leadership, engaged safeguarding personnel and effective strategies that personalise safeguarding and empower local communities.”

Find more about the Church of England's programme of independent safeguarding audits, and all reports published to date, on the [Church of England website](#).



“The most common words used to describe the work and worship environments in the audit surveys were: welcoming, supportive, collaborative, and inclusive.”

A response from Bishop Michael

I have been deeply heartened to see the positive feedback from the auditors across all the areas they reviewed, which recognises the extensive work that has taken place over many years to make our churches safer for all.

As good as it is to read the positive comments in the report, it is the recommendations that we will be paying closer attention to as we know that there is no place for complacency when it comes to safeguarding. Survivors' response to the audit is also something we will be reviewing carefully. It is vital that we continue to listen to them as we look to improve. We are highly conscious that our good practice now and our aspirations for the future come out of a history which has often seen victims of abuse let down in the past.

Some of the recommendations have already been taken on board and implemented following initial feedback from the auditors, others will require more careful consideration and time.

We are committed to doing this so we can continue to improve our practices to give all our communities the confidence that when they enter one of our churches, for

whatever reason, they will not only be warmly welcomed, but also know that they are entering a safe space.

I was particularly struck that the report took into account the role our churches play in our wider communities. As such, some of the recommendations reflect issues facing us all - mental health, County Lines drug trafficking and domestic violence. Our churches are viewed as places of safety, sanctuary and support for many facing these challenges. We need to be in a position to offer appropriate support safely, considering both the needs of those we want to help but also those of our clergy, staff and volunteers.

This report is a positive step on our safeguarding journey, one which has been achieved through the hard work of the dedicated safeguarding professionals in our diocesan safeguarding team and of course our committed and caring volunteer safeguarding officers in our churches, as well as our clergy. I would like to thank everyone for all that they have done and continue to do to.”

The Rt Revd Michael Beasley,
Bishop of Bath and Wells



“Leadership at all levels actively engages with safeguarding. This is evidenced by communication from leadership to staff and volunteers, emphasising safeguarding across the Cathedral's activities.”

A message from the Dean

We warmly welcome the audit findings and recommendations. I am clear that the improvements to our safeguarding culture acknowledged in this report are the shared achievements of the whole team of volunteers, staff and clergy at Wells Cathedral, who work tirelessly towards upholding the highest standards of care. I am grateful for their commitment and for all they do.

The audit concluded that safeguarding is becoming a core principle across all areas of our work and affirms the deep commitment of our Cathedral community to ensuring that safeguarding is essential to who we are. It is not just a responsibility, but a reflection of our values and faith in action. This is a meaningful step forward in our ongoing

journey to make Wells a welcoming Cathedral for all and where everyone, and especially the most vulnerable feels safe, valued and heard.

This is a moment to pause and celebrate all that has been achieved so far, but also to ensure that we continue to focus and improve on our safeguarding culture as we move forward together. Safeguarding is a journey, not a destination and we are committed to continuing to weave it into all we do, embedding it into every aspect of our life, and fostering a welcoming, caring and respectful environment for all and a place of joy.

Toby Wright
Dean of Wells

“The Cathedral adopts a comprehensive and multi-layered approach to promote safeguarding effectively across all audiences within its community. This is achieved through a range of methods designed to raise awareness, develop understanding, and embed safeguarding in the DNA of Cathedral life.”



Bath and Wells

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](#).

A selection of feedback relating to these key areas is detailed below. A summary of the list of recommendations can be found on pages nine to 12 of this document.

Download the full report at bathandwells.org.uk/safeguarding-audit.

1. Culture, leadership and capacity (see recommendations 1 to 20)

“Feedback from surveys and focus groups across the staff workforce and parish community indicated a strong desire to build and maintain a proactive and collective safeguarding culture.”

“The diocesan bishop has a strong, collaborative relationship with the Dean of Wells.”

2. Prevention (see recommendations 21 to 25)

“The diocese adheres to the House of Bishop’s Safeguarding Policy, ‘Promoting a Safer Church’ and details a range of safeguarding policies it follows on a dedicated web page.”

“The Go Team equips youth workers with safeguarding training, enabling them to deliver safeguarding-aware youth work across the diocese. This is good practice..”

3. Assessing and managing risk

“The DSO (as is standard practice across the CofE) sensibly applies a ‘low threshold’ to encourage reporting... This has helped the team to build relationships with those in safeguarding roles.”

“The Diocesan Safeguarding team are very open to support or give advice on any issue.”

4. Victims and survivors (see recommendations 26 to 28)

“The audit recognises the work in arranging apologies and meetings between victims/survivors and church leaders.”

“The diocese offers various support for victims/survivors such as support workers, therapy options and interim redress scheme provisions. It also contracts a respected local survivor service (FearFree) that can provide independent advocates.”

5. Learning, supervision & support (see recommendations 29 to 32)

“Bath and Wells provides a clear induction package for PSOs, supported by online networking and resource sharing and role-specific networking events, supported by the safeguarding co-ordinator. This is a strength.”

“Recognising the impact of mental health more generally, Bath and Wells has committed to the ambitious goal of having a mental health first aider in every church.”

Wells Cathedral

1. Culture, leadership and capacity

“Significant majorities within both the cathedral workforce and the worshipping community reported improvements in safeguarding, characterised the culture as welcoming, respectful, inclusive and supportive.”

“The audit saw and heard evidence of how current leaders had responded to negative legacy issues. This included staff consultation lunches; annual staff reviews; clear objective setting; leadership hot-desking to build relationships.”

2. Prevention

“The Cathedral has a range of measures in place to ensure the safer recruitment of individuals to various roles.”

“The Cathedral further demonstrates its commitment to good safeguarding practice through the development and adoption of a comprehensive suite of policies and procedures.”

“For those working directly with children and young people, regular discussions are held with staff and volunteers, and the Education Team maintains close communication with schools regarding trips.”

3. Assessing and managing risk

The audit observed a considered approach to safeguarding at the Cathedral aimed at identifying, managing and mitigating risk.”

“Safeguarding concerns are appropriately reported to the diocesan Safeguarding team (DST), with information sharing and collaborative working being maintained through the DSTs regular communication with safeguarding leads at the Cathedral.”

4. Victims and survivors

“The Cathedral’s Safeguarding webpage provides clear reporting pathways by providing contact information for the DST. It also links to the Diocesan website, that provides access to the online reporting form and confidential incident reporting information.”

“The Cathedral offers sanctuary and support, as evidenced by meetings and discussions held with victims / survivors to ensure their voices are heard. One survivor expressed gratitude and a sense of safety due to the actions of the Dean and Virgers.”

5. Learning, supervision & support

“Most Cathedral staff who responded to the Audit’s survey reported that safeguarding training had helped them to better understand their roles and responsibilities. The Cathedral has also engaged with wider contextual learning, including two dementia awareness sessions delivered by the Wells Dementia Action Alliance. This is positive practice, particularly given the Cathedral’s significant engagement with elderly visitors.”



“Senior staff members demonstrate a sound, general understanding of safeguarding, their individual roles and responsibilities within it, and the appropriate avenues for seeking help and support.”

A strong platform to build on

Diocesan Safeguarding Manager, Ben Goodhind, reflects on the Safeguarding Audit.

The Safeguarding Audit for Bath and Wells took place following a period when a considerable amount of work was undertaken by staff, volunteers and clergy in addressing the concerns raised by past safeguarding reviews, IICSA and PCR2. The feedback we have received reflects that work, and the commitment of all those staff, and the diocese as a whole, to a high level of contemporary safeguarding practice. One which has seen us seek to learn the lessons of past failures and try to do the best we can to support survivors.

The audit shows that we are on the right track in how we approach safeguarding in a really unique environment, and the positive impact faith communities can have in managing and reducing risk. From facing the challenges of an aging population, to supporting those with complex mental or physical health needs as well as providing safe spaces for children.

However, there remains a great deal to do and we will utilise the audit findings, including all the feedback from children, survivors and faith communities to drive high standards and stay focused on contributing to safe cultures in our local community.

I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to everyone in the diocese who contributes to this vital area of work and in particular our Parish Safeguarding Officers. INEQE undertook an extremely professional and thorough audit and highlighted some positive areas of practice and provided some constructive ideas of how we can be more effective. They have my grateful thanks for the way in which they undertook the audit.

The audit gives us a strong platform to build on in the future and as we prepare our safeguarding plan for the next three years.

Ben Goodhind
Safeguarding Manager



Summary of recommendations

Diocese of Bath and Wells

Culture, leadership and capacity

1. Establish a rotating Lead Safeguarding Archdeacon role, to enhance the presence of safeguarding in key leadership and governance meetings.
2. Archdeacons to build on existing safeguarding work undertaken during both formal and informal engagement in a number of ways, including implementing annual safeguarding meetings and integrating safeguarding into visit planning.
3. Develop a pool of trained chairs for safeguarding core group meetings, the meetings which provide scrutiny and planning for allegations management processes, such as safeguarding investigations.
4. DSO should attend all senior leadership meetings
5. Secure, fireproof cabinets should be implemented for the storage of all clergy personal files.
6. The diocese should review its current membership across all leadership and scrutiny bodies to ensure DSO's presence at relevant senior leadership meetings.
7. The DSAP should restructure its meetings to align with the forward plans of the Senior Leadership Team and Governance meetings. The DSAP agenda should complement an overarching strategy for operational oversight, safeguarding scrutiny, and governance assurance.
8. DSAP should engage in annual meetings with the Cathedral Safeguarding Advisory Panel (CSAP), archdeacons and the DSO to coordinate forward planning and scrutiny in a way that supports and reinforces the work of other stakeholders.
9. DSAP should expand its representation and community involvement.
10. To enable in-depth reviews of specific areas linked to national safeguarding standards and action plans, a three-year meeting cycle should be implemented.
11. DSAP should commission its own practice audits to move beyond simply receiving briefings in order to enable deeper insight, facilitate robust challenge, and measure the impact of safeguarding practices.
12. DSAP members should submit a brief written update report ahead of each meeting addressing four questions relevant to the member's area of responsibility or organisation. These should be reviewed ahead of each meeting, along with other pertinent documents.
13. The diocese should establish an autonomous Safeguarding Director, headed by a Director of Safeguarding, in order to significantly strengthen safeguarding across the diocese.
14. Prioritise the recruitment of two additional caseworkers.
15. Refocus the role of the Safeguarding Coordinator to support the goal of creating a dedicated telephone point of contact for parishes.
16. When appointed, the Cathedral Safeguarding Adviser, should have a short secondment to a similar cathedral, with an experienced adviser, in order to cultivate knowledge and expertise relevant to this unique setting.

Summary of recommendations

Diocese of Bath and Wells cont.

Prevention

17. Include a statement reinforcing commitment to safeguarding in all job adverts, application forms and job descriptions.
18. Define and adopt a Parish Dashboard quality assurance process involving dip sampling to test the veracity of data.
19. Consider options for increasing visibility of safeguarding content on its YouTube homepage, including, for example, featuring specific playlists.
20. To build on the valuable work undertaken by the Youth Voice Lead, the audit recommends developing engagement mechanisms to consider the needs, experiences and voices of children, young people and vulnerable adults within safeguarding prevention planning.

Recognising, assessing and managing risk

21. DSAP should develop a standalone safeguarding risk register from the diocesan register to allow for more focused scrutiny on the full range of safeguarding concerns.
22. As part of the triage process, the DSO should record the rationale for the risk grading, alongside specifying timescales for review.
23. Referred cases resulting in no further action and/or the provision of advice/guidance should be included as part of the supervision discussions between the DST and NST.
24. Diocese should reinforce to parishes the importance of using encrypted or secure email communication involving any safeguarding case.
25. Diocese should develop and implement a defined escalation process for dealing with differences of opinion regarding decision making and actions taken on safeguarding cases.

Victims and survivors

26. Improve visibility of 'Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse'
27. Survivor Strategy should outline a process to ensure consistent communication with victims and survivors.
28. Promote a culture of collaboration and shared decision-making throughout safeguarding structures, ensuring that the perspectives of victims and survivors are consistently sought and valued at every stage.

Learning, supervision and support

29. County Lines should be incorporated into training offered.
30. Training on sex offenders, including the development, implementation and monitoring of Safety Plans, should be incorporated into training offered.
31. Diocese should introduce their evaluation process across all courses, not just leadership and PSO training courses.
32. Should invite an experienced mental health professional to join DSAP.

Summary of recommendations

Wells Cathedral

1. The cathedral should continue to invest in and build on a stronger, safer and more inclusive community by addressing past issues, empowering shared responsibility for safeguarding, improving communication, seeking external guidance and monitoring progress.
2. Vicars Close project - develop and implement detailed, project-specific risk assessments for any apprenticeship roles for under 18s.
3. Vicars Close project - should onsite living arrangements be made for apprentices or community engagement staff be made in future robust safeguarding policies and procedures should be put in place.
4. Should continue to implement a rigorous and consistent DBS checking process for all individuals involved in the Vicars Close project.
5. Develop clear and documented safeguarding protocols outlining the procedures for identifying, reporting, and responding to safeguarding concerns involving apprentices or community members engaged through the Vicars Close project, as well as comprehensive safeguarding training.
6. A specific individual or role within the Vicars Close project team should have clear responsibility for overseeing all safeguarding matters relating to the initiative. Specific and age appropriate training should be undertaken by all staff and volunteers.
7. The cathedral should implement a robust system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the safeguarding measures put in place for the Vicars Close project.
8. The cathedral should mandate and ensure that all contractors and subcontractors engaged in the Vicars Close project formally agree to adhere to the cathedral's relevant safeguarding policies and procedures.
9. The cathedral should ensure that the Cathedral Safeguarding Advisory Panel (CSAP) operates effectively and provides robust oversight.
10. The new Cathedral Safeguarding Officer (CSO) should be employed on a full-time basis, with three days per week dedicated to their cathedral responsibilities, and two supporting the wider diocese.
11. The music department, working with the school, should consider the best ways to educate staff about the choristers' role, enabling them to better support the wellbeing of choristers given the intensity of their commitments.

Summary of recommendations

Wells Cathedral cont.

12. The cathedral should establish a Chorister Parent Representative Group to provide a means by which parents can be heard and consulted on safeguarding matters, and to help rebuild trust.
13. The role of chaperones should be actively promoted to choristers and their parents, helping to build relationships and reinforce their importance as a vital source of support and protection.
14. Child-friendly safeguarding posters should be placed in the Song Room and chorister toilet areas.
15. To enhance visibility and ensure consistent oversight, the Cathedral should install CCTV into key areas, such as the Song Rooms, organ loft, Education Centre and other frequently used routes.
16. Behaviour management training should be provided to those working directly with choristers, ensuring consistency and clarity in approach.
17. Wells Cathedral should undertake a chorister and chorister parent survey focused on communication, information sharing, and safeguarding.
18. To further strengthen the cathedral's Risk Register, it should be expanded to include a comprehensive assessment of safeguarding risks specific to the cathedral's context and environment.

Download a copy of the full report, which details the recommendations for both the Diocese of Bath and Wells, and Wells Cathedral in full at: www.bathandwells.org.uk/safeguarding-audit



Clockwise from top left: Jacqueline Keir-Bucknall, Safeguarding Trainer; Ben Goodhind, Safeguarding Manager; Jo Austin, Safeguarding Caseworker and Enita Andrews, Safeguarding Trainer

“The diocesan safeguarding team is well led and has made substantial positive contributions to safeguarding awareness, culture and practice across the diocese.”

“Feedback from individuals, focus groups, and written submissions consistently acknowledged the skills, abilities and dedication of the team.”



Safeguarding in Bath and Wells

The safeguarding team in the Diocese of Bath and Wells is led by Safeguarding Manager Ben Goodhind, who joined the diocese in 2021 after a 20-year career in safeguarding and public protection.

As well as managing his team of four, Ben is a point of contact for safeguarding advice and new referrals into the team.

Safeguarding Caseworker Jo Austin, joined the team in 2023, after spending nine years with the probation service. Jo is also the safeguarding lead for Wells Cathedral and spends at least a day a week there.

Out of hours support is provided by our partners ‘thirtyone:eight’ who offer an out of hours Safeguarding Helpline on 0303 003 1111 (17:00 - midnight and 07:00 to 09:00 Monday to Friday; 07:00 - midnight on Saturdays and Sundays), on bank holidays and other absences.

The team also includes two part-time safeguarding trainers; the Revd Jacqueline Keir-Bucknall and Enita Andrews. They deliver Leadership, PTO Leadership and PSO training and more, in person and online. They also support parish volunteers to deliver in-person version of online training for those unable to access the internet.

Last year, over 3,300 training courses were completed by people across the diocese.

The team is currently supported by Jake Lent, Safeguarding Coordinator (covering the maternity leave of Leonie Jones). The coordinator acts as a central administration hub for the team, but also offers frontline support to parishes on Safeguarding Dashboards, DBS issues and training.

In our parishes

Every one of our 493 parishes has a person who holds responsibility for safeguarding in their setting.

These Parish Safeguarding Officers are the main contact in the parish for all things safeguarding as well being key advocates for safeguarding in their setting.

They coordinate all safeguarding administration, including managing the Safeguarding Dashboards, which are compulsory for all parishes, to use and some are equipped to run local safeguarding training.



Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel

The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel is the body that oversees and supports the work of the diocesan Safeguarding team. Chaired by David Niven, an experienced social worker and former chair of the British Association of Social Workers, it includes representatives from a range of backgrounds and professions, as well as diocesan staff.

David says, “I very much see my role as a supporter of the work of the Safeguarding team and together we are focused not only on prevention, but also working with and for survivors.

“They, and our dedicated Parish Safeguarding Officers, are doing some excellent work in supporting church communities and I hope I can share that message as we strengthen our work with partner organisations concerned with safeguarding.”

Specialists from the legal profession, law enforcement and children’s work are represented, as are parish and cathedral safeguarding officers. FearFree, respected local survivor service, joined in October 2024 and bring the survivor voice onto the panel.

Contact the Diocese of Bath & Wells Safeguarding team

Use our online form to report your concern at: www.bathandwells.org.uk/report-it or contact Ben Goodhind, Safeguarding Manager on 01749 588917 or Jo Austin, Safeguarding Caseworker on 01749 588905

Out of hours, contact our emergency cover provider, thirtyone:eight on 0303 003 1111. They are available from 07:00 - 09:00 and 17:00 - midnight (Mon-Fri) and 7am to midnight (Sat & Sun) and bank holidays.

For safeguarding training queries [email: training.safeguarding@bathwells.anglican.org](mailto:training.safeguarding@bathwells.anglican.org)

For DBS enquiries [email: db.safeguarding@bathwells.anglican.org](mailto:db.safeguarding@bathwells.anglican.org).

Visit bathandwells.org.uk/safeguarding to find out more and to download a copy of the Safeguarding Audit poster and the Promoting a safer church poster to display in your setting.



Promoting a safer church

The care and protection of children, young people and adults involved in church activities is the responsibility of everyone who participates in the life of the church.

Have concerns?

Concerned that someone you know is, or at risk of, being abused or presents a risk to others? Please seek advice or, if necessary, report the matter to your Local Authority Social Care Services or the Police without delay.

Have any concerns?

Diocese of Bath & Wells Safeguarding team

Use our online form to report your concern at www.bathandwells.org.uk/report-concerns or contact:

Safeguarding Manager, Ben Goodhind, on 01749 588917

Safeguarding Caseworker, Jo Austin, on 01749 588905

Out of hours emergency cover

thirtyone:eight

from 5pm - midnight, 7am - 9am (Mon-Fri), 7am to midnight

(Sat & Sun) and bank holidays. Call them on 0303 003 1111.

Local Authority Social Services

Somerset: 0300 123 2224

BANES: bcssp.bathnes.gov.uk/form/report-a-concern

North Somerset: 01275 888 808 (children) 01275 888 801 (adult)

We commit to:

- Promoting a safer environment and culture
- Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children and vulnerable adults
- Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation
- Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse or other affected persons
- Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns/allegations of abuse and other affected persons
- Responding to those that may pose a present risk

Helplines

NSPCC: 0808 800 5000

Childline: 0800 1111

Stop It Now: 0800 1000 900

Samaritans: 116 123

National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0800 2000 247

NAPAC: 0808 801 0331

Family Lives: 0808 800 2222

National care line: 0800 0699 785

Men's Advice Line: 0808 8010 327

Safe Spaces - support for survivors of abuse: 0300 303 1056

Diocese of Bath and Wells

Flourish House, Wells BA5 1FD

Tel: 01749 670777

bathandwells.org.uk/safeguarding

Wells Cathedral

Cathedral Green, Wells BA5 2PA

Tel: 01749 674483

wellscathedral.org.uk/safeguarding

Download a copy of INEQE's full report into safeguarding in the Diocese of Bath and Wells and Wells Cathedral at:
www.bathandwells.org.uk/safeguarding-audit

