

Summary of the Wilkinson Report - *Review of The Independent Safeguarding Board 2023*

This is a lengthy report at 185 pages and a cost of £600,000. Wilkinson was instructed by the Archbishop's Council to adhere to specific terms of reference to "*use best efforts to establish a clear account of the events from the conception, design and implementation of the ISB, until the announcement of the termination of contracts.*"

To review the events following the termination were deemed out of scope for Wilkinson, however, the impact of the termination, particularly on survivors, was deemed to be within scope. It is this impact on survivors that has caught the attention of media outlets and even the commissioning of a Psychological Report by David Glasgow.

One of the accusations is that the ISB was terminated for more sinister reasons. Wilkinson makes it clear that "*I have not seen direct evidence or evidence from which I could infer that the Archbishops' Council terminated the contracts of the ISB in order to prevent it bringing to light allegations against senior clergy.*"

For full details of Wilkinson's findings, I encourage you to read the Lessons to be Learnt section of her report found on pages 150-153. In summary:

A complex matrix of reasons led to the termination of the ISB contracts. The structural reasons for the termination were principally the responsibility of the Archbishops' Council. The short-term reasons were the responsibility of both the original ISB members and the Archbishops' Council, all trying to operate in a situation where their roles were not clearly defined.

Wilkinson also reported that:

*The ISB was designed under **extreme time pressure** imposed principally by the Archbishop of Canterbury. While the intention to create an independent safeguarding function rapidly was laudable, **the speed at which it had to be designed resulted in serious design flaws.***

This point cannot be stated enough. There is a genuine concern amongst the majority of Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors and Officers that the response process to Jay's report will fall foul of this desire for haste.

Amendments were suggested for General Synod to immediately accept all of Jay's recommendations; it is for the benefit of safeguarding practice that these amendments were not accepted. The Lead Bishop of Safeguarding, The Rt Revd Joanne Grenfell spoke well on this matter at General Synod.

Summary of the [Jay Report](#) – *Future of Church Safeguarding (FoCS) 2024*

At 55 pages long, open to much legitimate scrutiny and costing £750,000, this report requires more digestion. Prof Alexis Jay was provided with specific terms of reference to produce a report:

In July 2023, we were approached by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to advise on how the Church of England could deliver fully independent safeguarding.

Our final terms of reference were:

- *To provide options and recommendations for forming an independent safeguarding and scrutiny body for the Church of England*
- *To make any recommendations for how further independence of safeguarding might be achieved*
- *To make any other recommendations that are necessary or appropriate*

Jay provided scrutiny of safeguarding in the Church of England, an important takeaway is highlighted on page 36 '*Criticism of the current system of safeguarding is not a reflection on the individual safeguarding professionals who work at the national and diocesan levels of the Church*'.

When providing recommendations, Jay was not asked whether independence *should* happen but to provide a pathway for how it *could* be achieved. This is important as while the criticisms of existing Church of England safeguarding are generally accepted, there has been no convincing argument presented that shows how independence would fix them.

Jay's recommendations:

1. We recommend the creation of two separate charities, one for independent operational safeguarding and one for independent scrutiny of safeguarding.
2. These charities will be funded by the Church but structurally independent of them, to ensure that safeguarding decisions are implemented in full, and not subverted, to provide fully independent scrutiny and to mark an unambiguous change of culture.
3. We further recommend that the General Synod pass a Measure, with Parliamentary approval and royal assent, to create two overarching duties requiring all Church institutions, bodies, and personnel, whether ordained or lay, remunerated or voluntary, to refer all safeguarding matters to these independent bodies and to implement all the decisions of these independent bodies.

Recommendation 1 appears to contradict Jay's previous IICSA recommendation '*Diocesan Safeguarding Officers should be employed locally, by the Diocese Board of Finance*' (2022, p116) perhaps due to the narrow Terms of Reference provided.

Response to Jay's report:

The Christian charity Thirtyone:Eight produced a report to respond to the Jay report. You can read [their response](#) to the report as it is significant.

We wholeheartedly support the recommendation of an external, independent body to scrutinise safeguarding in the Church of England, ensuring accountability for any failings. This recommendation has been advocated by us and others before, including in our evidence to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

They then go on to state clearly:

At Thirtyone:eight we believe that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, not just the responsibility of those appointed into safeguarding roles. Therefore, we are concerned to read the recommendation that operational responsibility for safeguarding should be removed from the Church.

We believe that removing operational safeguarding from the Church risks a belief that safeguarding is no longer their responsibility. This may lead to unintended consequences due to gaps in ownership, understanding, and practice. If responsibility for safeguarding is perceived to lie elsewhere, it could weaken efforts to foster safe, healthy church cultures.

Lessons Learnt 2 from the Wilkinson report covers the need for risk assessments in future situations. A risk assessment for how safe independence of delivery would be is required and there is not yet a convincing argument that it would be safe. As well as legal and financial efficacy assessments.

Dr Sam Nunney, Research and Evaluation Lead for the National Safeguarding Team has produced a response paper which 'brings to light Questionable Research Practices (QRPs) that are evident within the paper' which are helpfully summarised:

- *The FOCS Report does accurately highlight key issues that are facing safeguarding in the Church.*
- *It is felt that particular words and phrases could have been purposefully chosen to imply a more damning indication of the current state of safeguarding in the Church.*
- *The report is hindered by multiple instances of Questionable Research Practices. The existence of these is a threat to the integrity and validity of the data collected, the research methods used, and the subsequent recommendations.*

- *There are claims made in the report that appear to go beyond the scope of what the questions that were asked could have definitively answered.*
- *A significant error made in the statistical analysis for a resource model questions the expertise of the analyses conducted within the report.*

Response Group

A Response Group has been set up, terms of reference for which can be found here.

The Response Group are to follow a research model to establish what advice will ultimately be provided to the Archbishops Council. It is then up to the Archbishops Council whether this advice is taken or not.

The response group is asking for sufficient time to undertake such a large task, in line with Wilkinson's recommendation.

Julian Hodgson
DSA

Postscript by Barry Earnshaw, DSAP Chair & Convenor of Midlands DSAP Chairs Network

Midlands DSAP Chairs Network

As a postscript to this briefing by Julian, the Midlands DSAP Chairs Network had a meeting on 10 April 2024 when as well as discussing the potential Jay Review models, concern was expressed about the impact of this change on those involved in Safeguarding including DSAs/Os, CSA's/Os, DSTs & PSOs etc and also on Survivors/Victims when trying to accommodate a business as usual approach whilst having to consider the transformational change arising from Jay and IICSA 1-8.

As a result of these concerns it was agreed that the Midlands DSAP Chairs Network would work up a change management support programme setting out some key principles and providing flexibility for Diocese/Cathedrals to adjust to reflect their own particular circumstances. I have prepared an initial paper for consideration by Martin and Julian and this is attached as an Appendix.

APPENDIX

Dear Martin and Julian

Wilkinson and Jay Reports - Support to Staff and Survivors and Victims

At yesterday's Midlands DSAP Chairs Network meeting – see agenda attached and briefing paper prepared by David Cooper former DSAP Chair in Leicester and now member of NSP – there were discussions about the impact of Jay recommendations on the DSAs/DSOs, SG Teams and PSOs etc – also about the implications for survivors/victims, as it seems that the Jay proposals could have some time to work through, over the next 2/3 years was mentioned at yesterday's meeting, and trying to focus on business as usual whilst faced with significant change. This is not only from the Jay Review but the roll-out of the Pathfinder Projects into the regions – there are 8 regions and the East Midlands is one with Notts, Derby, Lincoln, Peterborough and think Leicester – will need to refer to the regional map to check this – with the recruitment of RSLs taking place later this year with an expectation that they will become operational from early 2025 – tbc.

The purpose of this email is to propose that initially the 3 of us consider this and draft a plan, an outline of which could go to the DSAP meeting on 25/4 if felt appropriate, and at the same time we could share our outline ideas with SSCG colleagues, some if not all are DSAP Members.

When considering this at yesterday's meeting there were discussions about developing something on a regional basis which could be tailored to meet local circumstances – but would include some guiding principles. These could include:

1. Understand the culture – safeguarding is everyone's business and responsibility within an enabling and supportive environment.
2. Lead with intent – be clear and committed about reasons for change.
3. Develop a clear vision for change – communications and commitment.
4. Encourage engagement – promote involvement.
5. Have clear communication channels – virtual, face2face, regular with clear & straightforward messaging.
6. Leverage in formal and informal structures – to support the transformation process.
7. Maintain initial vision but remain flexible – be adaptable and receptive to new ideas.
8. Prepare a risk management strategy – with mitigations.
9. Choose a leadership style – with an enabling and facilitating focus.
10. Regularly assess change – but be patient, celebrate success collectively, and give people a voice.

Hope you find this helpful and a start of developing a support package for both staff and survivors.

kind regards.

Barry