

SAFEGUARDING AUDIT

January 2026


June Briefing

Welcome to our Monthly Safeguarding Briefing.

As you may know, the Diocese of Southwell is currently preparing for a Safeguarding Audit being carried out by INEQE Safeguarding Group, an independent organisation commissioned by the National Church of England.

Our audit is scheduled for 7–9 January 2026 and will take a close look at the safeguarding practices and culture across our Diocese including the Cathedral and parishes— as part of a national review happening in every diocese across the country.

This is a great opportunity to reflect on what's working well and identify where we can strengthen safeguarding within our churches.



Why does the INEQE Audit matter?

The audit is not just about compliance; it's about our shared responsibility to ensure every church is a place of safety, compassion, and trust, and allows for the sharing of good practice across the Diocese. Demonstrating commitment to transparency and improvement helps rebuild trust among parishioners and the wider public.

The INEQE audit is part of the Church of England's national response to the recommendations from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA). It's a chance for us to shine a light on what's working, spot any gaps, and strengthen how we safeguard everyone across the diocese and cathedral communities. Think of it as a safeguarding health check—with a big dose of collaboration and reflection!

The INEQE audit to date has found the following areas that may also apply elsewhere:

- Gaps or failings in current safeguarding systems, enabling targeted improvements.
- A shift towards a more open, responsive, and survivor-centred approach within the Church.
- Changes in safeguarding policies, leadership accountability, and better training for clergy and staff.
- Effectiveness of current safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults and how well we respond to concerns.
- Areas of good practice and where improvements can be made.

The way in which INEQE do this is to measure our performance against the national safeguarding standards.

Project Update: What have we done so far

- **Hazel McKibbin** has been appointed as the **INEQE Project Chair**. Hazel brings extensive experience from working in the local authority managing complex safeguarding processes.
- The **Single Point of Contact** (SPOC) for INEQE for the diocese and cathedral is **Julian Hodgson** as the DSA/DSO.
- **Julie King** has been appointed as the **INEQE Project Assistant**. Julie joins us with a background in HR Business Partnering and brings valuable experience in managing large-scale projects.
- We've completed **two preliminary self-audit assessments** of the cathedral and the diocese and board of finance to identify areas of work we still need to do. We're happy to share the results (please see assessment results below).
- We have emailed **demographic surveys** to all parishes with each Parish Safeguarding Officer (or nominated persons) to complete. The Parish Demographic Survey is a vital part of the INEQE Safeguarding Audit, helping to build an accurate picture of clergy, staff, and volunteers across the diocese. this sets the context against which INEQE will measure our safeguarding arrangements.
- We have set up a system to collate the parish and cathedral information and we will transfer that information to INEQE's system in stages starting on 1st September. What this means for you is that you may have different deadlines for various bits of information that we will request from you.
- INEQE will be **conducting interviews, reviewing documents, and consulting** with a wide range of stakeholders – including Parishes and Cathedrals.
- **Audit key dates** will be shared on the diocesan website. There will be 2 places you can access this which will be on the news feed and on the safeguarding section.
- **Questionnaires** will be distributed after August to all stakeholders and groups of service users who have agreed to participate.
- In addition to providing Information, the main way in which you can participate in the audit is to complete any questionnaires, or if you wish to participate in a focus group of PSO's please let us know!

Self-Assessment Results

As part of the wider preparation for the INEQE Safeguarding Audit, the Diocese and Cathedral team have completed a self-assessment exercise using the National Safeguarding Standards. and using the NST audit tools. This snapshot gives an early indication of areas of strength and where further development may be needed.

The data will be shared with INEQE as part of the audit. It helps them get a clear sense of what's working well and where improvements can be made. In turn, they'll give us constructive feedback and tailored recommendations to help us keep building a strong, safe culture across the Diocese.

CATHEDRAL RESULTS

	Average Score	Standard %
Culture, Leadership and Capacity	2.4	60
Prevention	3.4	84
Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk	3.6	90
Victims and Survivors	3.4	86
Learning, Supervision and Support	3.0	75

- Top marks went to *Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk* - a strong sign that we're confident and consistent in how we handle safeguarding concerns. This was to be expected because the diocese takes responsibility for the vast majority of safeguarding incidences.
- *Prevention* and *Victims and Survivors* are in a good place, but we'll be working on gathering more evidence and ensuring consistent practice across the board.

- The biggest opportunity for development is in Culture, Leadership and Capacity - so we'll be focusing on strengthening safeguarding leadership across the cathedral community.

DIOCESE RESULTS

	Average Score	Standard %
Culture, Leadership and Capacity	3.5	89
Prevention	3.5	86
Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk	4.0	100
Victims and Survivors	3.8	94
Learning, Supervision and Support	3.7	92

- Again, *Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk* came out as our strongest area - reflecting the great work happening in the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST).
- We also scored well in *Victims and Survivors* and *Learning, Supervision and Support*, showing a clear commitment to growth and wellbeing.
- *Prevention* and *Leadership & Culture* are areas where we've got some work to do, particularly around consistency in safer recruitment and cross-team collaboration.

Monthly Focus

PARISH DEMOGRAPHICS SURVEY: Deadline 31st August 2025

To support the audit and build a clearer picture of safeguarding across the diocese, all parishes have been asked to complete a Parish Demographics Survey. This short survey will help us understand the unique makeup of your church community and inform future safeguarding support and planning as part of the audit process.

We will be collating demographic data from every parish. A link has been shared with each Parish Safeguarding Officer [or nominated persons] by email. Thank you to those parishes so far who have completed the survey!

We ask all incumbents and Parish Safeguarding Officers to prioritise completing this important survey as soon as possible.

SAFEGUARDING DASHBOARD

We are encouraging those parishes who have not yet engaged in the dashboard to do so as this is what INEQE will look at to ensure our parishes are compliant with the national standards. For support with getting the dashboard operational contact a member of the safeguarding team.

NEXT MONTH

Mindful of holiday season, we are focusing on the factual data pertaining to the cathedral and diocese which doesn't involve parish input.

THANK YOU

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has supported the INEQE Safeguarding Project so far. Whether you've contributed to surveys, attended training, helped coordinate information, taken part in the self-assessment, or simply shared your time and insights — your involvement has been invaluable. This is a collective effort, and your commitment is helping us build a stronger, safer culture across the Diocese and Cathedral. Most of all, thank you for your safeguarding efforts that go unseen, week in, week out, that makes your church a safer place for all.

