

*To all Incumbent clergy, PSOs, Church Wardens, Deanery Administrators, and PCC Secretaries
cc. Bishop's Chaplain, Archdeacons*

24th September 2025

Dear Colleagues,

RE: INEQE requests for data

I am writing a general letter following responses from some clergy and PSOs indicating that they were not fully aware of the expectations or impact of requests for information relating to the INEQE audit. I realise that while it has been on our work plans for many months, a delicate balance was needed between alerting parishes to the forthcoming audit in enough time to prepare but not too far in advance that momentum could not be maintained. There is also the need to link it to but not distract from the implementation of the National Standards which are not the same as the INEQE Audit. Sorry if we did not get that balance right for your parish/parishes.

The purpose of this letter is to reassure you that we understand the pressures parishes are under and to try to allay some of the anxieties about gathering data that you don't already collate or know. I am now aware of more details relating to the INEQE audit which I would also want to share with you.

So, to help you put the INEQE audit into perspective, I thought it might be helpful to recap what INEQE and the National Standards are all about and to clarify what details are needed from your parishes, as well as providing some information about how you might get involved in the audit process.

- The **National Safeguarding Standards** were published in 2023, but we withheld launching them until the summer of 2024, due to the new Vision Strategy Refresh which was a significant initiative within the diocese during the early part of 2024.
- There are 5 National Safeguarding Standards covering: CULTURE, PREVENTION, MANAGING ALLEGATIONS, SURVIVORS and LEARNING, SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT.
- Parishes and the diocese have until 31st December 2027 to evidence that we are compliant with all 5 of the standards.
- We have provided regular on-line briefings on each of the Standards, and they have been a focus of the 2024 annual safeguarding conference as well as regularly mentioned in the safeguarding termly newsletters. For anyone who missed these briefings we will be holding a day when we cover all five Standards in one sitting. We are also looking at making the briefings available online as recordings in the new year. There will also be other briefing

events during 2026 and 2027 to ensure your parish is on track to ensure compliance by the end of 2027.

- There is no expectation that parishes will be fully compliant with the National Standards by the time we ask for data or by the time of the INEQE Audit. It is work in progress that runs alongside any inspection process.

INEQE Audit

- The **INEQE audit** was a recommendation from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), that began in 2015 and finally reported on safeguarding within the Church of England in 2019. It recommended regular, independent external inspections or audits and INEQE (a leading independent safeguarding organisation) were the organisation who succeeded in the tendering process to audit each diocese and Cathedral between 2024 and 2027.
- The INEQE audit measures each diocese and Cathedral against their progress of implementing the 5 National Safeguarding Standards.
- Our INEQE audit starts on **6th- 9th January 2026**, but we need to start gathering the details and data from now to complete the self-assessment document which is known as the 360 report.
- The purpose of the self-assessment is to evidence the aspects of safeguarding which the diocese feels are good at (celebrating success), those areas that require further development (the gaps) and the plans to address any weakness (the areas of learning).
- INEQE will focus on policies and procedures as well as safeguarding practices, which is why so much information is needing to be presented before the auditors arrive on site.
- On 5th September INEQE released all the documentation templates which the diocese will be required to complete in advance of the Audit, and access to the various questionnaires that parishes are requested to circulate for completion in advance of the Audit.
- Part of the pre-audit information could be gathered in advance of the documentation being released as it related to INEQE understanding the diocese and its make up. This is the information you have recently been asked to obtain and send into the Diocesan Safeguarding Team – the ‘Parish Demographic Survey’.
- Even if you don’t have all of the information which we have asked for in the Parish Demographic Survey, please do still respond with a NIL return as this will enable us to pull together as complete a self-audit as we can. You can send your return to independentreviewer@southwell.anglican.org No other statistical data will need to be asked of you prior to the auditors visit. We do not anticipate needing to ask you for any further data as we will be able to access any additional information from the Parish Dashboards.

What we are doing

- The diocese has appointed an Independent Chair of our INEQE Project Board to help oversee our preparations, and a project assistant. Both roles are part-time, but will help

us to gather, collate and present the information INEQE need in the most helpful way possible.

- We have already issued two monthly briefings focusing only on INEQE, links to which have been included in the Diocese's weekly Communications Update emails. These briefings will continue until after the audit as we will need to provide you with information about the recommendations made and the action plan needed to implement them.
- These briefings will be the primary means of communicating with you about the INEQE Audit so please can ensure that you read these monthly briefings, promptly and fully. Thank you.
- We send the briefings to PSOs and they are in the regular weekly Comms Update as well as being accessible [through the diocesan website here](#). We are committed to keeping you informed as we engage with the INEQE auditors.
- We know that the auditors will want to speak directly to some PSOs and or clergy, through the convening of focus groups. This will be voluntary, and we will provide support and guidance to anyone who agrees to meet with the auditors to answer questions, allay fears and ensure they are fully prepared.

[Click here to download a seven-minute briefing](#) that we produced for the Diocesan Synod which you may find helpful to share at a PCC meeting, and as soon as we get access to the INEQE posters and other resources, we will ensure you have them to brief your congregations.

I'm sure you'll realise the importance of good preparation for the audit and the need to present an honest and open picture of the safeguarding arrangements we have in the diocese, including what works well at the parish level, so please ensure that you keep yourself informed by reading the Monthly INEQE Audit briefings, circulating the questionnaires and asking any questions you have to help others understand what is going on with the audit. Please email independentreviewer@southwell.anglican.org and we will do our best to answer them for you.

Links to the INEQE Questionnaires and Surveys

Please use the following links to complete the questionnaires and to find resources available for sharing what is happening with your church communities.

[INEQE Safeguarding Audit - Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham](#)

[INEQE Surveys](#)

Thank you again for all that you are doing to make our places of worship as safe as we can for all. And thank you for your cooperation in providing the INEQE data requested so far.

Yours sincerely,



Julian Hodgson
DSO