

SAFEGUARDING AUDIT

January 2026

August Briefing

Welcome to our Monthly Safeguarding Briefing.

As part of our ongoing preparation for the INEQE Safeguarding Audit, we are continuing to make good progress to ensure that our Diocese and Cathedral are ready to demonstrate best safeguarding practice and identify areas where we can strengthen our culture and processes further. The audit will take place from **7–9 January 2026** as part of the national Church of England review following the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA).

An Update from Julian Hodgson (DSO) and Project Single Point of Contact (SPOC):

“While we recognise the pressures on parishes and everyone involved in the audit, it is important to stress that this is not about every parish being fully compliant at this stage, but about showing our commitment to the national standards and our direction of travel. We are grateful for the data and information that parishes have already shared, which is helping us to build a fair and accurate picture of safeguarding across the diocese, and we remain committed to keeping everyone supported and well informed throughout the process”.

In early September we will start having regular contact with INEQE. Just as a reminder, INEQE is the organisation who are auditing the diocese and cathedrals across the country and if you want to look at the reports that they have already completed you can do so **[here](#)**.

Shortly after we started our dialogue with INEQE, we will send out letters explaining in more detail what the audit will comprise of to all Incumbent clergy, PSOs, Churchwardens, Deanery Administrators, and PCC Secretaries. These letters explain why requests for data are being made, set out what information is needed, and provide reassurance about the process. To support this, the letter will also include a seven-minute briefing recently shared at Diocesan Synod, along with signposts to further resources and upcoming INEQE briefings. There will also be an ad clerum sent out from the Bishop to Clergy. The aim is to ensure everyone feels informed and supported, and to give parishes clarity about what is required while recognising the pressures you face.

There will be an understandable desire to try to make sure that your parishes are fully compliant with the national standards, but we urge you strongly not to attempt this. INEQE will be looking for an understanding of where the diocese and parish are confident that they're meeting the national standards, but more importantly, there is a plan for how to address those areas that need further development.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Julian Hodgson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Julian Hodgson
DSO/ INEQE SPOC

The INEQE Project Board

The INEQE project board are meeting monthly to oversee all preparation work and to coordinate activity and monitor progress. The Board members are:

Project Chair:

Hazel McKibbin



Diocese Single Point of Contact:

Julian Hodgson (DSO)



Project Assistant:

Julie King

Cathedral Single Point of Contact:

To be appointed on 1st September 2025



Comms Representative:

Laura Frank (Communications & Resources Manager)

HR Representative:

As required

Encouraging Progress...

Preparation for the INEQE safeguarding audit in January 2026 is progressing well, and we are encouraged by the level of engagement across parishes and the cathedral. The audit, which follows recommendations from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (ICSA), will provide a valuable opportunity to reflect on our safeguarding practice and demonstrate the progress we are making against the National Safeguarding Standards.

There will be various opportunities for people across the diocese to engage and participate in the audit process whether through completing questionnaires that will be circulated prior to the audit visit or participating in focus groups discussions. Therefore, please save the dates **6–9 January 2026**. You will not be required to be free for the whole three days; however, we do not as yet have the timetable - watch this space and please hold these dates for now.

Audit Readiness Overview

Across the cathedral and diocese, we're busy gathering and collating evidence to show how we're meeting the national safeguarding standards, ready to upload into INEQES Audit 360 system from September – a big milestone in the project. The deadline for collating evidence for INEQE is the end of October. Alongside this, INEQE will be providing posters and other resources which we will distribute once we have received them.

As highlighted in last month's project update, a 7 minute briefing with a supporting presentation will be running weekly for five weeks from 2nd September. Each session will take place on Teams from 6:30–7:30pm and is open to Area Deans, Clergy (Incumbent status), PSOs, and Churchwardens. You only need to attend one of the dates listed below.

Wed 10TH September
Monday 15th September
Tuesday 23rd September
Wednesday 1st October

[Click here for link for the links to the above briefings](#)



Miles Dent, Cathedral Safeguarding Officer, shares August Update.

"During August I have continued to support staff in preparing for the INEQE safeguarding audit in January 2026. This has included reviewing and updating key safeguarding policies and procedures to reflect new legislation and staff changes, refreshing the safeguarding section of the cathedral website, and working on the design of a new safeguarding leaflet to support staff and volunteers. Data collection for the 360 audit is also well underway, with requests going out to colleagues for assistance, and arrangements being made for the secure storage of evidence. I remain available for advice on safeguarding matters and low-level concerns, and I am grateful to everyone for your continued support and engagement in this important work".

"We are also delighted to welcome Phil Morris as our new Chief Operating Officer (COO). In addition to this role, Phil will be the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for the Cathedral's INEQE project. He brings with him a wealth of experience in developing commercial strategies and building strong partnerships and will be working closely with colleagues across the cathedral as we look to the future".

Safeguarding Dashboard: The dashboard is the best way of keeping all your safeguarding records together, at a glance, with an easy system that tells you whether you are compliant with the House of Bishops' safeguarding requirements.

If any parish has not yet signed up to the Safeguarding Dashboard or Hub, there's still time to get started. This is the most effective way to demonstrate your progress towards compliance with national safeguarding standards.

Please contact safeguarding@southwell.anglican.org — we are here and happy to help and it is easy to get you started. We can link you in with a PSO/lead recruiter who is already operating the safeguarding dashboard and hubs if that is helpful.

INEQE will have access to the reporting section of the safeguarding dashboards as a way of seeing how many parishes are working towards the national standards. Please be assured that INEQE will not be given access to the safeguarding hub which contains personal data.

Parish Demographic Survey: The Parish Demographic Survey has been essential for understanding the make-up of each parish and assisting us with future safeguarding planning. Whilst the closing date was 31st August, we have kept the link to the survey open for a further 2 weeks so please complete your survey if you haven't already done so, even if there is a NIL return.

[Click here to access the survey](#)

Please remember there is no requirement to gather additional personal data retrospectively beyond what is reasonably accessible. We are very grateful for your feedback so far.

If you need any help with the survey or have concerns about how to complete it, please contact Julie King, Project Assistant:

julie.king@southwell.anglican.org / 01636 817216.

Or in Julie's absence (1st September – 24th September), contact Julian Hodgson:

Julian.Hodgson@southwell.anglican.org / 01636 817 983.

NEXT MONTH

Audit Surveys - Your help is needed!

As part of the audit process, the team from INEQE Safeguarding Group would like to engage with a wide spectrum of individuals from dioceses, parishes and cathedral communities through online surveys. These surveys will act as a mechanism through which individuals can comment on matters relevant to the audit's focus. Participation in the surveys is optional.

The surveys are both anonymous (the audit team are not seeking to identify individuals) and confidential (individuals will not be identified in INEQE's report). The purpose of the surveys is to enable the audit team to conduct a wider analysis of practice across Church bodies and give individuals the opportunity to contribute to the audit. **No one from the Church of England or other body will be provided with or have access to the survey responses.**

Have your say! It's important for as many voices as possible to be represented, so that the auditors gain a true picture of the safeguarding culture in our diocese.

How you can help:

- Watch this space for further information about the surveys! Please take time to keep abreast of information about the audit and to find out how you can access the surveys.
- There are several surveys, each for different groups of people. Will you inform you of the timescales to complete the surveys once we know.
- The surveys are anonymous, and you will not be asked to name yourself or your church.
- You are encouraged to complete as many surveys are as relevant to you.

THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone contributing their time, information, and commitment to this important work. Every form completed, briefing attended, and piece of evidence gathered strengthens our shared safeguarding culture.

Together, we are ensuring our Diocese and Cathedral remain safe, supportive communities for everyone.

