



SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL REPORT TO DIOCESAN BISHOPS' COUNCIL

1 January 2025 – 31 December 2025

DBC MEETING: 29 January 2026

Introduction and Outline of Report

We are pleased to present this report focusing on the activities of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST) during 2025.

2025 was a significant year for the Church of England in relation to safeguarding and challenging for the Diocese of London. Safeguarding is now firmly recognised as a core trustee responsibility, requiring clear oversight, effective assurance, and demonstrable evidence that risks of harm are being actively managed.

The General Synod vote in February 2025 on proposals to strengthen independence, clarify roles, and enhance national oversight of safeguarding, marked a pivotal moment in the Church's safeguarding journey. In due course, these developments will have direct implications for the Diocese, particularly in relation to quality assurance, resourcing, and governance.

In September 2025, the Church of England's new [Code of Practice on Managing and Reporting Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations](#) came into force. The new Code represents a major step forward in strengthening safeguarding culture and accountability. It sets out clear, nationally consistent expectations.

Also in September, INEQE carried out the Diocese of London's independent safeguarding audit. Engagement across parishes, diocesan teams, and senior leadership was strong. Almost 2,400 survey responses were submitted and 150 people interviewed as part of the audit visit. While we await the draft report and recommendations, preliminary feedback indicated that through effective leadership, investment and prioritisation in recent years, significant progress has been made. However, despite that investment, the Diocese remains under-resourced at leadership and team levels and increased capacity will be required to meet the demands arising from the scale and complexity of the Diocese and its safeguarding responsibilities.

The Charity Commission, in November 2025, reinforced its expectations that safeguarding is a fundamental element of good governance. Trustees "*must take reasonable steps to protect from harm all people who come into contact with their charity*" and ensure that robust systems are in place to respond appropriately to concerns, and learn from incidents. This includes maintaining effective oversight of safeguarding responsibilities and being able to evidence that safeguarding risks are actively monitored and reviewed.

The National Safeguarding Team Southeast Region Safeguarding Lead, Lucy McAuley carried out a very helpful Casework Quality Assurance Report in June 2025. This can be read in **Appendix 1**.

Monthly referrals into the DST

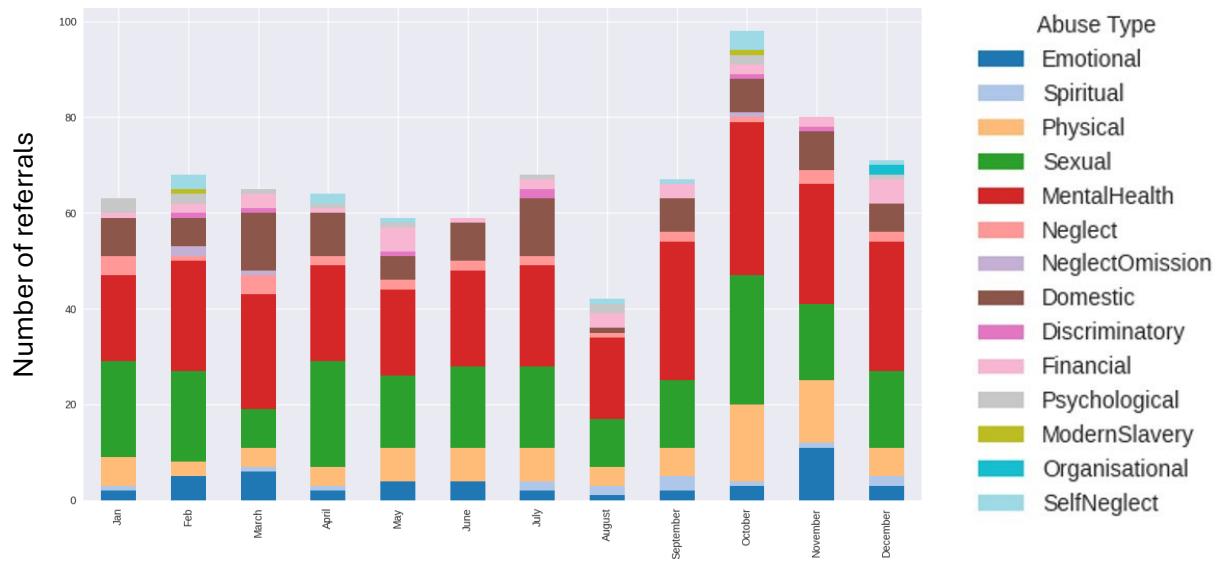


Safeguarding demand remained high throughout 2025, with 1,297 referrals (average 108 pcm, up from 100 pcm in 2024).

- Two Cities generated the highest volume (417 followed by Kensington 250).
- Autumn (Sep–Nov) was the busiest period across all areas, with October peaking at 158 referrals.
- August was the quietest month, reflecting reduced parish activity.

Planning for 2026: Strengthen Q3-Q4 staffing resilience.

Trends of referrals by types of abuse



A clear pattern emerges across the year:

- Mental health (274) and sexual abuse (201) dominate referrals, with repeated high-intensity months and strong autumn surges.
- Physical (83) and domestic abuse (89) form a second tier of consistently high activity.
- Emotional abuse, neglect, financial/material abuse, and psychological abuse provide a steady baseline.

Planning for 2026: Specialist mental-health-aware and trauma-informed practice.

Progress of the diocese against the National Safeguarding Standards in 2025¹

STANDARD ONE: Culture, Leadership & Capacity

Church bodies have safe and healthy cultures, effective leadership, resourcing and scrutiny arrangements to deliver high-quality safeguarding practices and outcomes.

Scrutiny - Scrutiny of the diocesan safeguarding arrangements is the remit of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP). The DSAP is now systematically monitoring the work of the diocese on 5 levels through its regular quarterly meetings:

- Policy scrutiny and other annual matters; in 2025, the Safeguarding Policy was reviewed, received a high-level annual review of complaints and noted that the Risk Register had been reviewed elsewhere.
- Data – gathering and scrutiny of performance data by episcopal area
- Standard by standard scrutiny of activity in relation to at least one of the national standards at each meeting. In 2025, the DSAP received presentations in relation to Standards Two (Prevention), Standard Five (Learning, Supervision and Support) and monitored on going projects in relation to others.
- Department by department scrutiny of safeguarding awareness and activity within at least one internal department/group per meeting. In 2025, the Archdeacons, HR team, Communications Team, and Youth & Children team gave reports to the DSAP.
- Quality assurance of case work. The first report of the Regional Safeguarding Lead is appended.
- Additional matters arising are considered as appropriate.

In addition, the 2025 INEQE audit provided independent scrutiny of leadership, culture, and risk controls. Early indications highlight the need for increased safeguarding capacity to meet the preventative and operational demands of a large and complex diocese. It is hoped that the INEQE recommendations (not available at the time of writing) will inform the priorities for future development activity by the DST and scrutiny by the DSAP.

Culture - It is acknowledged that the safeguarding culture within Diocese of London is currently under the spotlight. The INEQE report and recommendations are expected to provide an assessment and guidance.

The Diocese has worked to embed the Church of England Code of Conduct across governance and leadership, clarifying expectations of behaviour and accountability at all levels.

Leadership and capacity – In line with usual Diocesan practice, Leadership resilience has been actively monitored during periods of transition, with mitigation measures in place to maintain oversight and service stability.

Governance structures provide clear escalation mechanisms for serious incidents and Charity Commission reporting, processing of complaints, and regular safeguarding oversight to trustees.

Capacity in the Diocesan Safeguarding Team has been stretched by the ongoing increase in referrals, preparation for the INEQE safeguarding audit and a series of related employee relations issues that led to internal team challenges and some staff absence.

The DSAs for Kensington and Edmonton Areas moved on to other roles in the third quarter of 2025 and we welcomed their replacements in October. An additional, a part-time Safeguarding Adviser on a temporary contract was recruited in Q3 to add to team capacity.

¹ Indicators: <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/ourdiocese.pdf>

Key Statistics (2025)

- **Safeguarding Case Management Groups (SCMG) / Professional Meetings:**

These are held in a safeguarding case that involve Church Officers, other than those being dealt with under Section 4E (employees) and Section 4F (Failure to Follow). The purpose is to:

- Identify and manage risk
- Share ideas and discussion to ensure the correct processes are followed
- Consider what support needs to be offered to the complainant or the respondent, and if there are others who need safeguarding.
- Reflect and consider organisational or cultural factors and what could have been done better.

An average of 9 SCMGs/month were held in 2025.

2024: 9

2023: 8

STANDARD TWO: Prevention

Church bodies have in place a planned range of measures which together are effective in preventing abuse.

Safer recruitment practices are strongly promoted across the Diocese, with parishes signposted to the National [Safer Recruitment and People Management guidance](#) as best practice and to achieve consistency of approach across the Church.

Mandatory safeguarding training continues to be rolled out, including new modules informed by national updates and feedback.

The Safer Churches Programme Manager continues to run monthly PSO drop-in sessions with consistently positive feedback, attended by an average of 42 PSOs

2024: 34

2023: 32

Parish safeguarding compliance is supported through training, use of the Parish Safeguarding Dashboards & Hubs, and monthly Diocesan monitoring, and the Archdeacons include safeguarding enquiries in their three-yearly visitations.

Key Statistics (2025)

- DBS checks completed: 4228, an average of 352/month. **2024: 3808** **2023: 3695**

This represents 50% more checks than expected to verify the suitability of those applying for roles which involve working with people at risk of harm, which is extremely positive.

- Blemished DBS checks: an average of 4/month **2024: 3/month** **2023: 2/month**

All are risk-assessed and managed

- Parishes actively using safeguarding dashboards: 95% **2024: 92%** **2023: 83%**

- Parishes using the dashboards at Level 2+: 89% **2024: 67%** **2023: 54%**

- PSO induction training:

- 136 PSOs trained (25% of parishes)

- Cumulative coverage: 90%

STANDARD THREE: Recognising, Assessing & Managing Risk

Risk assessments, safety plans and associated processes are of high quality and result in positive outcomes.

Safeguarding concerns and allegations which are referred to the DST are responded to in line with the new Codes of Practice on Managing and Reporting Concerns. Case management is underpinned by clear pathways, timely decision-making, and effective cooperation with statutory agencies.

Safeguarding features on the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) and overseen by the DSAP. The Director of People attends and reports to the ARC.

The DST has continued to strengthen effective partnership working internally, externally, with local authorities and with statutory agencies. While the number of local authorities the DST works with remains a challenge, establishing clear single points of contact has simplified this.

Thirtyone-eight has again provided an out of hours service for parishes up until midnight on weekdays and on weekends, as well as *ad hoc* cover for the team when needed for resilience or when they are on training and networking days.

Safeguarding Case Management Groups (SCMG) oversee and manage responses to safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers, focusing on supporting victims/survivors and ensuring fair processes are followed. All SCMGs include the relevant Archdeacon, Diocesan advisor and the Diocesan Registrar (or deputy). Previously SCMGs were routinely chaired by the Head of Safeguarding, but several of the Archdeacons have taken training in 2025 to enable them to chair these meetings as well.

Key Statistics (2025)

Total safeguarding referrals: 1,297, averaging 108/month	2024: 100/month	2023: 69/month
Total number of referrals involving children: 225	2024: 239	2023: 11
Open MyConcern cases (average per month): 137	2024: 118	2023: 92
Safety plans (average per month): 38	2024: 33	2023: 37
Most common categories of concern:		
○ Mental health: 274	2024: 231	2023: 169
○ Sexual abuse: 201	2024: 200	2023: 130
○ Domestic abuse: 89	2024: 83	2023: 29
○ Physical abuse: 83	2024: 94	2023: 22
○ Emotional abuse: 45	2024: 74	2023: 14

These figures reflect both increased reporting and the growing complexity of safeguarding needs across the Diocese.

STANDARD FOUR: Victims & Survivors

Victims and survivors experience the timeliness and quality of responses as positively meeting their needs.

It is recognised that this is a standard where further development is needed.

We recognise the profound impact abuse can have on trust, wellbeing and faith, and we work in partnership with statutory agencies and local organisations to provide a response that is transparent, survivor-led and grounded in dignity and safety. However, while victims and survivors are at the centre of all we do and we are committed to responding with compassion, respect and trauma-informed care, we acknowledge that we have not been able to meet the needs and expectations of everyone.

Survivors are signposted to national schemes/specialist services and offered a minimum of six therapeutic sessions with a provider of their choice to support their needs. On the basis of need, additional sessions may be funded, and we offer support with interim support scheme applications.

In 2025, the Diocese worked with the Diocese of Southwark towards establishing a cross-London Survivor Reference Group. However, this has not yet come to fruition successfully. Victim centred practice remains a core priority, and we look forward to continuing to develop this area in 2026 with the benefit of any advice from INEQE.

Key Statistics (2025)

Peak number of safety plans: 43	2024: 36	2023: 41
Average safety plans per month: 38	2024: 34	2023: 37

STANDARD FIVE: Learning, Supervision & Support

All those engaged in safeguarding receive the learning and support necessary to respond effectively.

The Diocese has implemented the National Safeguarding Learning & Development Framework 2024, offering structured pathways for clergy, volunteers, and safeguarding professionals. Supervision and reflective practice are embedded within safeguarding roles, with learning from cases and audits informing continuous improvement.

Feedback shows the 2025 Safeguarding Leadership Training was very well received, with participants giving high scores for overall quality, trainer knowledge, and clarity. The interactive format, especially breakout groups and shared discussion, was consistently praised, and many noted that the new training felt stronger and more engaging than previous versions. Key areas for development include reducing group size, allowing more time for case studies, and offering clearer consolidation of learning. Feedback also highlighted the value of exploring the emotional and cultural dimensions of safeguarding and the differing needs of larger parishes. Overall, the training made a strong contribution to strengthening safeguarding confidence and culture across our churches.

Leadership safeguarding training:

• 278 clergy	2024:293	2023:321
• 437 lay leaders	2024:496	2023:442
• 19% (176 individuals) non-attendance rate	2024:22%	2023:28%

The Safer Churches Programme Manager continues to chair the Southeast Regional Trainers Network, strengthening consistency and quality across the region.

The Diocese continues to invest in the learning and development of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. All DSAs and the Safer Churches Programme Manager attend the National networking days twice a year. The DSAP chair attended the annual event for DSAP chairs hosted by the NST.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) has remained a sustained priority across the diocese for a number of years. In line with previous practice, the DST works to a clear CPD plan, supporting the team to respond effectively, offer high-quality support to parishes, and develop strong professional confidence and credibility in safeguarding. The team follows a bespoke programme of specialist learning, which in 2025 included Suzy Lamplugh training, managing risk and trauma-informed practice, alongside monthly one-to-one supervision and at least annual mandatory clinical supervision and resilience check-ins.

Key Statistics:

- Forty-six online safeguarding leadership courses and four in person were delivered in 2025.
- Three safeguarding leadership courses for clergy with Permission to Officiate were delivered.
- Two courses of Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse were delivered.
- Seven sessions of PSO induction were delivered by an area Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor; five online and two in person.

Other Notable Activity and Outcomes

Across 2025, safeguarding performance data demonstrates:

- Increased demand and complexity in safeguarding activity
- Strong timeliness and case management controls
- Increased levels of parish compliance with safer recruitment and dashboard usage
- Clear evidence supporting the need for increased safeguarding resource, aligning with early indications of INEQE audit findings
- Good financial stewardship operating within budget, with the exception of the increased number of DBS checks (see above)

Trustees can take assurance that safeguarding arrangements are robust, actively monitored, and improving, while recognising that continued investment and leadership focus will be required as national reforms take effect.

Conclusion

The Diocese has benefited greatly from the leadership of Bishop Sarah Mullally and Bishop Joanne Grenfell. As both move into new responsibilities, careful attention is being given to maintaining stability in safeguarding leadership and accountability.

The Bishop of Kensington has assumed the role of Lead Bishop for Safeguarding in the Diocese of London, ensuring continuity of episcopal oversight alongside the leadership of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

The Diocese is grateful for the strong engagement of the General Secretary, the support and challenge of the Diocesan Bishops' Council, and the scrutiny of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel. While the data evidences growing confidence in the DST in parishes, it is recognised that further work is needed to strengthen engagement with victims and survivors and address a deficit of trust.

Safeguarding remains a shared responsibility across the Diocese. Continued vigilance, leadership, and commitment will be essential to ensure that our churches remain safe places for all.



Sara Black
Safer Churches Programme Manager
20th January 2026

Appendix 1



Diocese of London

Casework Quality Assurance Report

June 2025

Lucy McAuley
NST South East Region Safeguarding Lead

Introduction

The NST Quality Assurance Framework (see Appendix 1) provides for Regional Safeguarding Leads (RSL) to conduct 4 in-depth case audits biannually, and is being developed to include a streamlined dip-sampling of 30-50 low-level advice cases per year, within each Diocese. The Diocese of London's Head of Safeguarding (HOS), and Casework Manager (Dep-DSO), Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor Panel (DSAP) Chair, and Regional Safeguarding Lead (RSL) agreed an enhanced programme of casework quality assurance work. The current piece of work expanded on the baseline programme to support both the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST) and DSAP to identify and scrutinise good practice and areas for development in relation to safeguarding casework, as part of a wider ongoing programme of continuous improvement within the Diocese. From a national perspective, the work aimed to pilot draft QA tools and reporting processes that might be used to support the gathering of both qualitative and quantitative national data, as well as providing a means of local, regional, and national benchmarking of safeguarding casework practice. The current report constitutes the first RSL quality assurance report for scrutiny by the relevant DSAP, and will form the basis of future periodic reports in this area.

Method

The diocese uses the My Concern case management system (NSCMS), which the RSL accessed remotely and, due to the time constraints involved, without individual caseworker liaison. The QA project involved a mixture of substantive case audits and a dip-sampling review of advice-only case threshold decisions/NSCMS functionality compliance (see Appendix 2 for sample QA tools). QA activity was targeted to provide a comparable body of work across the diocese's five Episcopal Areas, including the following QA work within each area:

- Case audit - Safety Plan x 1.
- Case audit – Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG) x 1
- Case audit - Low-risk advice case requiring an ongoing safeguarding response x 1.
- Case audit - Lower-level concern requiring only initial referrals and/or signposting x 1.
- Dip-sampling – Lower-level concern requiring only referrals/signposting x 5.

Thus, a total of 45 cases were subject to QA during June 2025; cases were selected from the previous 6 months and comprised a sample of approximately 7.5%. The agreed review approach was to focus on adherence to House of Bishops safeguarding policy and the efficacy of risk and support processes; additionally, the RSL examined case recording practice in relation to themes arising from the body of published Ineqe safeguarding audits.

The RSL found it necessary to adapt the pilot tools during the QA process due to clear suitability/utility issues. The decision was also made not to individually grade the audits due to the lack of a robust underlying scoring matrix (against a scoring system of Insufficient, Needs Improvement, Sufficient, Good, Outstanding). However, detailed narrative feedback has been provided in relation to individual cases, and aggregated high-level feedback for individual case types is provided below, with an indication of overall grading.

Findings

Advice-Only File Threshold Dip-Sampling

Practice in this area is Good, and is underpinned by robust and timely triage by the Casework Manager. The supervisory triage 'template' constitutes a thorough assessment of risk, support needs and statutory reporting, and some outstanding examples of bespoke signposting were seen from both parishes and the DST. Appropriate Concern Level/Threshold decisions were made across all cases. Areas for development relate solely to NSCMS recording practice.

Advice-Only File Case Audits

More in-depth examination of these cases reinforced the Good practice in this area, with case supervision being particularly effective in terms of triage and case closure. Some Outstanding practice was seen in respect of a parish proactively identifying, recording, and reporting a safeguarding concern, with good signposting provided by the parish and DST. The DST was seen to provide appropriate signposting and advise appropriate statutory referrals across all cases. Areas for development relate solely to NSCMS recording practice.

Ongoing Advice File Case Audits

Practice in this area was Sufficient-Good, with case recording issues being more prominent in these cases. Nonetheless, all lower-level concerns had been appropriately triaged as requiring some level of ongoing work and were subject to regular and meaningful supervision and appropriate outcomes.

Safety Plan File Case Audits

Practice in this area was Good, with the church risk assessment tool being used to reach appropriate decisions on identifying and managing risk. Practice relating to Reference Groups is a particular area of strength for the diocese, with Outstanding practice around confidentiality and training. Areas for development again primarily relate to NSCMS recording practice, but a number of cases were subject to an element of drift that indicated capacity issues.

SCMG Case Audits

Practice in this area was universally Good and one case in particular demonstrated Outstanding practice across all areas of risk management and support. SCMG processes are robust and were seen to be initiated in appropriate circumstances, completed within acceptable timescales, and conducted in a manner that is commensurate with national guidance as well as providing defensible decisions on how to manage individual and organisational risk. These cases also demonstrated strong working relationships between the DST and other diocesan departments, resulting in collaborative and holistic responses to safeguarding cases. Casework supervision and leadership oversight/support was particularly effective in these cases, and the welfare of both Complainants and Respondents was seen to be paramount. As before, areas for development related to NSCMS recording practice.

Commentary

Although only a snapshot of DST casework was examined, the current QA project found that DST safeguarding practice is strong, with robust risk management and Complainant/Respondent support processes; all casework was commensurate with relevant House of Bishops guidance in these areas.

Whilst core safeguarding practice was seen to be effective and largely timely, there were various issues relating to case recording; although these did not, on the whole, undermine the quality of the diocesan safeguarding response, such issues do present opportunities for risk to arise and may be subject to comment within the impending Ineqe audit (as has been seen in the audits completed thus far). Case recording issues relate primarily to an under use of NSCMS functionality in respect of data entry and flagging, as well as creating comprehensive case chronologies and clarity of document storage. Development in this area will be supported by an impending programme of national NSCMS training due to be rolled out over the coming months.

However, some case recording issues, and the occasional drift in casework, also appear to have roots in DST capacity, with workload constraining caseworkers in terms of complementing document uploads with concise but meaningful chronology entries and managing case actions in a consistently timely way. Furthermore, issues in these areas will undoubtedly impact the Casework Manager's capacity and ability to continue to robustly monitor and support safeguarding casework, which is significant given that this supervisory function was seen to underpin and drive effective casework practice.

The current QA work has yielded valuable learning in respect of the pilot QA tools' ability to consistently gather and assess data that supports national and local needs. Work is planned with the NST Quality Assurance & Performance Manager (QAPM) to develop these tools further over the coming quarter, and the diocese is invited to repeat the current process towards the end of 2025 in order to further test the tools and provide a comparative data set.

Next Steps

- DSAP invited to scrutinise/provide feedback on current process & make comment on the direction of future QA processes.
- RSL to meet with HOS and/or Dep-DSO for individual/thematic case feedback/discussion.
- HOS & Dept-DSA to provide feedback to RSL on QA process & tools.
- RSL to meet with QAPM for informal QA tool review & development in July 2025.
- RSLs & QAPM to meet in October 2025 for formal QA framework & tool development.
- RSL to update DST regarding the roll-out of further NSCMS training over 2025.