



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.

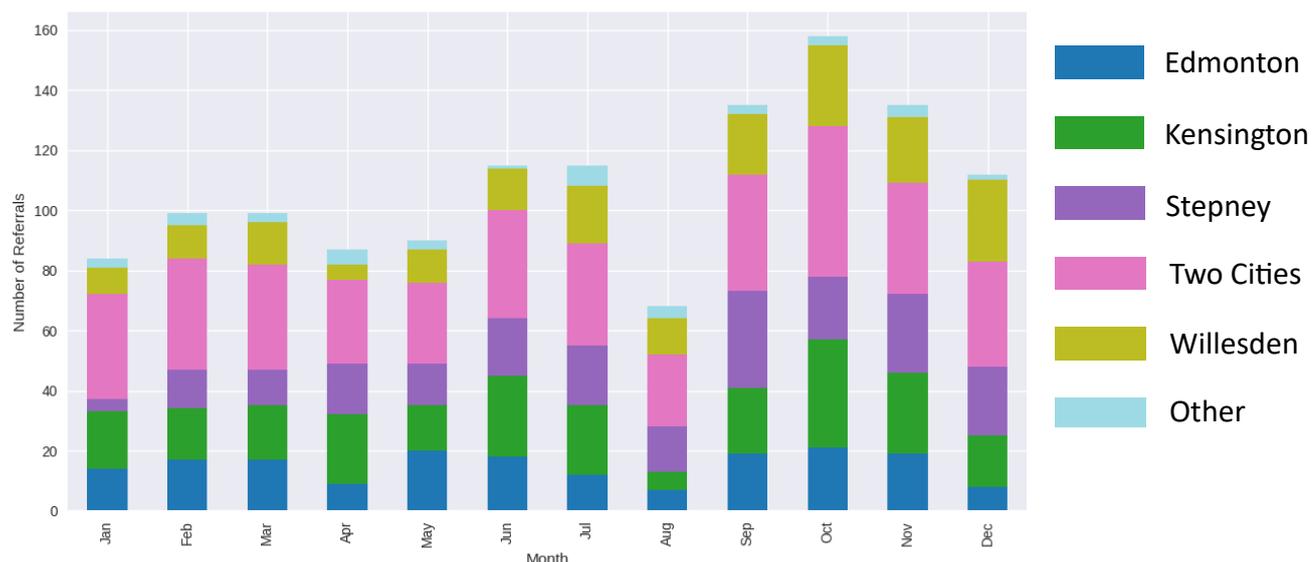
In September 2025, the Church of England's new [Code of Practice on Managing and Reporting Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations](#) came into force. The new Code represents a major step forward in strengthening safeguarding culture and accountability. It sets out clear, nationally consistent expectations.

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

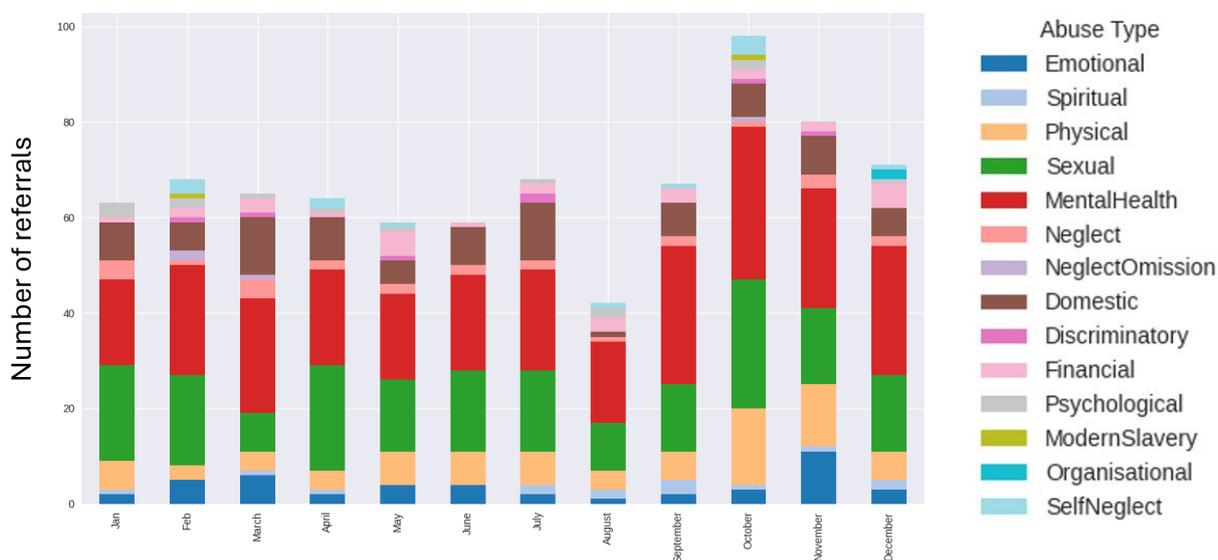


Safeguarding demand remained high throughout 2025, with 1,297 referrals (average 108 pcm, up from 100 pcm in 2024).

- 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

- **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.

	2023	2024	2025
SCMG meetings (average per month)	8	9	9

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.

	2023	2024	2025
PSO Drop-in attendance (average per month)	32	34	42

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

	2023	2024	2025
Number of DBS checks (average per month) ²	308	317	352
Blemished DBS checks (average per month) ³	2	3	4
Parishes actively using safeguarding dashboards	83%	92%	95%
Parishes using the dashboards at Level 2+	54%	67%	89%

PSO induction training:

136 PSOs trained (25% of parishes)

Cumulative coverage: 90%

² 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

³ All are risk-assessed and managed

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

	2023	2024	2025
Safeguarding referrals (average per month)	69	100	108
Referrals involving children (average per month)	14	20	19
Open MyConcern cases (average per month)	92	118	137
Most common categories of concern:			
• Mental Health	169	231	274
• Sexual abuse	130	200	201
• Domestic abuse	29	83	89
• Physical abuse	22	94	83
• Emotional abuse	14	74	45

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

	2023	2024	2025
Peak number of safety plans	41	36	43
Average safety plans per month	37	34	38

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:

	2023	2024	2025
Clergy	321	293	278
Lay leaders	442	496	437
Non-attendance rate	28%	22%	19%

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 Bishop's 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