

Safeguarding Report for Diocesan Synod

Date of meeting: 22.11.25

Report presented by: Harry Steele

Report prepared by: Siân Checkley (Diocesan Safeguarding Officer)

Culture, Leadership and Capacity - Church bodies have safe and healthy cultures, effective leadership, resourcing and scrutiny arrangements necessary to deliver high quality safeguarding practices and outcomes. Include organisational issues.

The Diocese of Sheffield received formal certification from the Archbishops' Council under the Church of England's safeguarding framework, known as Amending Canon No 42 on 24th September 2025. This certification confirms that the Diocese has met all the necessary national standards for safeguarding leadership and oversight. This certification reflects the Diocese's ongoing commitment to safeguarding and the safety of all those who engage with church life.

Preparation for the INEQE audit taking place in May 2026 continue. There are plans for ongoing communications across the Diocese to raise awareness and encourage a wide range of people to get involved, completing surveys and engaging in focus groups. Work has commenced on tidying up the records in My Concern and the Bishop's Office is undertaking work with the clergy files. We are also considering the self-assessment tools provided by the national team in order to better understand where the Diocese is currently and what work needs to take place to improve our practice across the Diocese as a whole.

The safeguarding team continue to work on ideas around increasing the support available to PSOs with PSO drop in sessions commencing this month. This will be an opportunity for PSOs to come together informally to discuss any aspect of their role.

The team submitted an initial expression of interest to the national team's new innovation and impact fund and were invited to submit a full application however were unsuccessful in securing any funding.

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

Two parish dashboards remain unregistered and 95.2% of parishes continue to actively use the dashboard. Consideration as to whether to make use of the safeguarding hub mandatory will be discussed at the next DSAP meeting.

The autumn edition of the safeguarding team newsletter was published on 4th October and included information about the INEQE audit, training, Safeguarding Sunday, domestic abuse, Diocesan certification, PSO drop ins and updated PSO information from the national team. We are aiming to publish the winter edition just before Christmas.

Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk - Risk assessments, safety plans and associated processes are of a high quality and result in positive outcomes. The assessment and management of risk is underpinned by effective partnership working.

Since my last report the safeguarding team has been involved to a greater or lesser extent with 48 cases which includes three new cases and one case where we have received new information on a known situation. We have closed three cases. We have reviewed one safety plan, are in the process of reviewing eleven plans of which we are awaiting the return of five and have set up one new plan. We have six cases which involve ongoing core group processes and three which are currently subject to LADO processes.

We received similar numbers of requests for advice and guidance as in the same period last year with the greatest numbers being concerns within the church, safer recruitment and safe practice queries.

Chris Brain, former leader of the Nine O'Clock Service in Sheffield, was remanded in custody on the 7th October. There will be a retrial in September 2026 with regard to the five charges where the jury were unable to reach a verdict and Chris Brain will be sentenced following the retrial. A safeguarding practice review will be commissioned upon the conclusion of the case with preparatory work to be undertaken in the intervening months.

Victims and Survivors - Victims and survivors experience the timeliness and quality of Church bodies' responses to disclosures, and their subsequent support, as positively meeting their needs, including their search for justice and helping their healing process.

Support continues to be offered to anyone impacted by the trial of Chris Brian. Information regarding the support services available is published on a dedicated NOS page on the safeguarding section of the Diocesan website.

A Safeguarding Sunday service will be held at Rotherham Minster on Sunday 16th November. This service is dedicated to acknowledging, remembering and standing with survivors of abuse or domestic violence. It has been prepared by people with lived experience in collaboration with the Diocesan Safeguarding team.

Learning, Supervision and Support - All those engaged in safeguarding related activity in Church bodies receive the type and level of learning, professional development, support and supervision necessary to respond to safeguarding situations, victims and survivors, and respondents, effectively. Include training delivery.

During September 2025 308 online courses were accessed, with 104 face to face courses being completed. This breaks down as 123 people completing the basic safeguarding course and 89 the foundation course with 26 completing the combined basic and foundation course. 46 people completed the leadership course, 22 the safer recruitment course, 103 the domestic abuse course and 3 the modern-day slavery course provided via the clewer initiative. Claire has started delivering the safer recruitment and people management course face to face to assist parishes understand this important process and how the formal employment processes can be adapted to the more informal settings involving volunteers.

Claire has visited two parishes to deliver training and three parishes have received training from volunteer trainers within their parish.

Siân, Elina and Rachel attended the national day for Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors and Officers and Claire attended a similar day for trainers. The DSO/A day included information regarding the new risk assessment documentation, hearing the voices of children and young people, reporting to the charity commission and safeguarding the safeguarders. The trainers day looked at the development of a revised version of the leadership course as the current one has been in operation for nearly three years.

Siân Checkley
14.10.25