

The Church of England has been in the process of developing a set of National Safeguarding Standards since 2020.

The approved version of the National Safeguarding Standards can be downloaded [here](#).

The Standards are essential for the Church to understand the quality and, most importantly, the impact of its safeguarding activity. In addition, the Standards provide a simple construct which integrates the complexity of all safeguarding activity in the Church. All such activities, at all levels across the Church, will relate to at least one Standard. Thus, the Standards provide a means of connecting and integrating what might otherwise be experienced as disconnected activities and also enable the Church to easily communicate its commitment to safeguarding.

The Five Standards are:

1. **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.
2. **Prevention:** Church bodies have in place a planned range of measures which together are effective in preventing abuse in their context.
3. **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.
4. **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.
5. **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.

Each Standard contains:

- A statement of the Standard itself.
- An explanation of why it is important.
- A series of 'What Good Looks Like' Indicators - these are detailed criteria that show how well a Standard is being achieved.
- Details of relevant House of Bishops' Guidance and Code, training, resources and tools that can be used to help gather data relevant to the indicators. These are important as they will equip Church bodies with the means to undertake quality assurance work locally, but also in a way that is consistent across other bodies.

It is not expected that every Church body will be able to meet every indicator overnight. The Standards set out the direction of travel and will enable Church bodies to identify both their strengths and areas for development, which will in turn inform their strategic planning in respect of safeguarding.

The Development of the Standards

The National Safeguarding Standards were originally proposed in February 2020. This aimed to create a mechanism for answering the question "How good is our safeguarding activity?".

A series of workshops with dioceses, cathedrals, victims and survivors and parishes led to the creation of the "What Good Looks Like" Indicators that sit within each Standard. This list was then refined, with huge thanks to our Pathfinder dioceses and cathedrals, and the Cathedral Safeguarding Network.

This refined version of the Standards was then put to a wide-reaching consultation, again seeking the views of dioceses, cathedrals, victims and survivors and parishes. Responses to the Standards were overwhelmingly positive and also helped to develop and tweak them into the structure that they are in presently. If you would like to see the 'National Safeguarding Standards Consultation Report', you can download that [here](#).

The current version of the National Safeguarding Standards were approved by the National Safeguarding Steering Group (NSSG) in July 2023.

'Our Church'

Following the consultation on the National Safeguarding Standards in May 2023, a commitment was made to “add a clear methodology to outline what is expected for each context (e.g., dioceses, cathedrals, parishes). This would help the reading of the Standards to be less overwhelming and to give a clearer outline as to how each of the ‘What Good Looks Like’ Indicators are relevant.

‘Our Church’ is a series of documents that highlight what is relevant for each individual context. It is currently broken down into 'Our Parish', 'Our Cathedral', and 'Our Diocese'. Within each of these, the relevant indicators have been tweaked to follow on from a sentence that begins with “Our [Insert Context Here]...”. For example, in the over-arching Standards Document, we see "2.3. A range of good materials and methods are used to promote safeguarding that are suitable for all audiences (e.g., children and young people)”, while in the ‘Our Parish’ document, we see “[Our Parish] uses a range of good materials and methods to promote safeguarding to all audiences (e.g., children and young people)”. The reasoning for this was to ensure that each indicator felt as clear and relatable as possible.

Some of the materials are in the final development stage and should be ready very soon.

- Our Diocese...
 - ['Our Diocese' Leaflet](#)
- Our Cathedral...
 - ['Our Cathedral' Leaflet](#)
- Our Parish...
 - ['Our Parish' Poster for noticeboards](#)
 - ['Our Parish' Booklet for Parish Safeguarding Officers](#)
 - ['Our Parish' Leaflet for Parish Safeguarding Officers](#)

Current resources and tools

Some of the tools below are still being tested, so may slightly change between now and January 2024.

If you have any questions or feedback about the tools and resources or would like to share your own resources and tools, please contact nss@churchofengland.org.

Standards Self-Audit Tools

Quality Assurance Self-Audit Excel Tools

The tools below allow you to self-audit how well your setting meets the Standards, looking at each relevant indicator as asking you to input a value between 0 (not meeting it at all) and 4 (fully meeting it).

- [General Version](#)
- [Diocesan Version](#)
- [Cathedral Version](#)
- [Parish Version](#)

If you choose to use one of these tools as a Diocese or Cathedral, it would be greatly appreciated if you could send a completed version to nss@churchofengland.org. Any data received will not be shared but brought together with others to ascertain if there is a particular area that could be focused on centrally to help push growth and improvement.

Culture, Leadership and Capacity

Resources

- [Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse](#)
- [Key Roles and Responsibilities of Church Office Holders and Bodies Practice Guidance](#)
- [Safeguarding Code of Practice: Safeguarding Practice Reviews](#)
- [Safeguarding Pastoral Principles *\(In Development\)*](#)

Tools

- [Healthy Cultures Tool](#)
- [Healthy Cultures Survey](#)
- [Safeguarding Culture Review Questions](#)
- [DSAP Observation Tool](#)
- [SCIE Cathedral Safeguarding Audit Learning Lessons Question Pack](#)
- [Thirtyone:eight Culture Conversation Cube](#)

Prevention

Resources

[Code of Safer Working Practice](#)

- [Safer Environment and Activities](#)
- [Safer Recruitment and People Management](#)

Tools

- Safer Recruitment and People Management Self-Assessment Tool
 - [Full Version](#)
 - [Short Version](#)
- [Parish Safeguarding Dashboard](#)

Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk
Resources

- [Practice Guidance: Responding to, assessing and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers](#)
- [Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults](#)

Tools

- [Risk Assessment Tool](#)
- [Church Safety Plan Tool](#)
- [Core Group Observation Tool](#)

Victims and Survivors
Resources

- [Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse](#)
- Diocese of Newcastle Resources
 - [If I Told You, What Would You Do?](#)
 - [Peer Support Group](#)

Tools

- [Service User Experience Survey](#)

Learning, Supervision and Support

Resources

- [Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework](#)
- [Safeguarding Virtual Library](#)

Tools

- [Safeguarding Learning Governance Checklist](#)
- Safeguarding Learning Checklists:
 - [Observation Checklists](#)
 - [Facilitator Checklist for Self-Auditing](#)
 - [Peer Audit Checklists.](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are we doing this?

Organisations often struggle with quality assurance: they tend to focus on only the safeguarding activity, rather than the impact. In busy environments, it can be hard to step back and ask the question: ‘What difference is our activity actually making to people’s lives?’.

Any organisation with safeguarding responsibilities needs to know, and be able to demonstrate, how well it is fulfilling those responsibilities, in order to achieve three crucial organisational objectives:

- To make sure that people are being protected and responded to with compassion and humanity.
- To be transparent and accountable to key stakeholders (for example, victims and survivors of abuse, trustees, the wider community and the public).
- To inform resource and strategic planning in respect of safeguarding.

Organisations achieve these objectives by putting in place a systematic quality assurance framework (QAF).

How are the Standards and Quality Assurance Framework used?

Quality assurance processes only have value if they drive continuous safeguarding improvement in the organisation. Quality assurance information should encourage discussion and reflection within the organisation. This enables the following questions to be considered:

- What is this telling us?
- What does this mean for us?
- What do we need to do?

For this process to work in practice, a clear governance framework needs to be in place for quality assurance. This framework would set out the Who? When? And How? As outlined below:

- Who is the quality assurance information reported to?
- When (and how frequently) is it reported?
- How is it discussed? How is it used to inform future plans?

Quality assurance activity needs to be planned over multiple years, as no organisation can gather all the information it might need all the time, nor in one go. A suggested example would be to choose two standards each year to review and explore in-depth, with the acknowledgement that there will be independent audits exploring the Standards every five years.

How will these align with the new independent audits?

The National Safeguarding Standards are part of a quality assurance framework helping Church bodies to determine “what good safeguarding looks like” in their setting. For the upcoming independent audits, INEQE will not, therefore, seek to asses whether Church bodies “comply” or “do not comply” with Standards. Instead, they will provide Church bodies with practical, constructive advice and recommendations, describing areas of strength and areas for development in their safeguarding practice in relation to the Standards.

Church bodies who participate in the audit programme shortly after the launch of the National Safeguarding Standards cannot be expected to have fully embedded the Standards in their practice. However, it is hoped that these Church bodies will nevertheless benefit from practical, constructive advice and recommendations about how the Standards can be embedded and utilised in future.

INEQE will provide more information concerning the focus of an audit to Church bodies in advance of their audit. This will largely fall within the broad scope of the National Safeguarding Standards.

What if we are not meeting all of the 'What Good Looks Like' indicators?

The National Safeguarding Standards and the relevant indicators should not be viewed as a compliance-based, tick-box exercise. The hope is that they are used to identify both areas of strength, and areas for learning, development and growth.

The desire is that by using the Standards, we can celebrate and share areas of good practice, but also help to forge action plans for how growth and development can be achieved.

Can I use my own tools and/or resources to measure the Standards?

Of course! Whilst the hope is that using the tools provided on this page will help to drive an element of consistency, we would love to hear about other resources and tools being used. If you are also happy to share these resources and tools, please e-mail [**nss@churchofengland.org**](mailto:nss@churchofengland.org) and we can get it uploaded to the current lists above (credited to you!) so that others can also benefit.

How does this work link with the parish Safeguarding Dashboards?

The National Safeguarding Team has joined a creative partnership with the Safeguarding Dashboards.

This new partnership should help to integrate the relevant 'What Good Looks Like' Indicators into the Safeguarding Dashboards, allowing parishes to continue exploring their safeguarding activity utilising a system that they are familiar with.

Contact us

If you would like to contact us with comments on the Standards, requests for assistance in using or developing resources and tools, or to share resources or tools of your own, please do not hesitate to contact us at [**nss@churchofengland.org**](mailto:nss@churchofengland.org).

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