

Throughout the year churches across the country open their doors to people of all ages, for services, weekday clubs and vital community projects. IICSA and survivor voices have rightly put our safeguarding practices under the spotlight. We welcome many and we must welcome them safely. Like all organisations who work with children and young people safeguarding training is mandatory for those in certain roles. It is not an opt-in.

Yet while the Church is under a great deal of scrutiny for not having had more rigorous training requirements in place, at the same time we are criticised for seeking to raise training standards.

As a Church we believe in the intrinsic value of training to facilitate culture change to promote the safety and welfare of everyone who access our churches.

The care and protection of children, young people and adults is an important part of our Christian ministry and therefore training is vital to ensure Church Officers understand their responsibilities. Everyone who participates in the life of the Church has a role to play in promoting a safer church and this is underpinned by robust good quality training.

My own personal experience of safeguarding training (all clergy including bishops are expected to keep up to date has been more than positive. I attended a refresher at the end of last year and those who turned up reluctantly - some admitted they had - all shared that they went away both better equipped and with a deeper understanding of the issues.

Training is not only about understanding practice guidance and procedures, it is about deepening our understanding and respect for children, young people, and vulnerable adults. We have learnt from other reviews and inquiries (the Australia Royal Commission for example) that when preventative measures are in place (ie people understand how to recognise concerns and where to report them) these were extremely effective at decreasing the prevalence of abuse.

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Deputy Lead Bishop for Safeguarding and Chair of the Training & Development Working Group

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