

The Church of England is currently responding to two important safeguarding reports looking at ways forward on independence (including external scrutiny) and reflecting on lessons learnt on the former Independent Safeguarding Board, ISB.

The [report from barrister Sarah Wilkinson](#) sets out a detailed account of events around the first phase of the ISB until the announcement of the termination of contracts of members in June 2023. The Review, published in December 2023, makes findings on the reasons which led to the decision to terminate and identifies lessons to be learnt.

The [report from Professor Alexis Jay](#), former chair of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, IICSA, makes recommendations for a new independent safeguarding and scrutiny body for the Church of England. Professor Jay was [commissioned by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York](#) to carry out this work in July 2023 and her report was published in February 2024.

## Engagement survey

The Wilkinson/Jay Response Group initial engagement survey has now closed. It ran from 21 March to 18 April. Thank you to all those who took part. Analysis of survey results will now take place and will form part of the report to General Synod. If you have any further questions or comments connected to the work of the Response Group, please contact [jayresponse@churchofengland.org](mailto:jayresponse@churchofengland.org)

## Join an online focus group or workshop

There will be a series of focus groups and workshops with survivors and their advocates, safeguarding professionals working in the Church, senior leaders in the Church, and a range of other people. Mostly, these will be coordinated with stakeholders directly to invite them to online discussion groups. Some dates of online sessions will be posted here, for people who are not already on mailing lists relating to their role.

## Contact the team

A Response Group, chaired by the lead safeguarding bishop, will oversee engagement work on these reviews, and an independent co-chair is also being appointed - see [revised Terms of Reference](#).

For all enquiries email [jayresponse@churchofengland.org](mailto:jayresponse@churchofengland.org)

## Updates

[Independent co-chair for safeguarding Response Group appointed](#) - April 2024

## Support

If you or anyone you are in contact with are affected by the publication of this report and want to talk to someone independently please call the Safe Spaces helpline on 0300 303 1056 or visit [safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk](https://safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk).

Alternatively, you may wish to contact the diocesan safeguarding team in your area or the National Safeguarding Team at [safeguarding@churchofengland.org](mailto:safeguarding@churchofengland.org). There are also [other support services](#) available.

## Further Information

There are experienced research professionals carrying out quantitative and qualitative fieldwork to gather insights from: survivors of church-related abuse and their advocates; the national Church and its governance bodies; the Church at local/diocesan level including churchgoers and people who come into contact with Church activities, chaplaincy, and social action projects; and external audiences including but not limited to Parliament and Government departments, potential staff and office-holders, professionals in other safeguarding sectors, organisations which support clergy and lay ministries, media and the general public.

Alongside the fieldwork, the Response Group will consider learning gathered from other sectors, benchmarking with faith-based and secular organisations who have outsourced some or all safeguarding functions. In addition, the Response Group may commission a transformation specialist to carry out a complexity review in order to assess the feasibility of proposed models.

All of the findings will be analysed and compiled into advice for our governance bodies (the House of Bishops and the Archbishops' Council) who will take a proposed response to General Synod for debate.

## Scrutiny of work

All the work in this project is checked and reviewed by experts, some inside the Church and some from elsewhere. For example, research design is scrutinised by an external academic commissioned to deliver rigorous peer review. This is just one of the ways to ensure as much quality control as possible.

## Background on independence

### 2018-2022

- [Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, IICSA](#) - Church of England hearings and reports

### 2021

- The [Independent Safeguarding Board, ISB](#), was set up in following a decision by the Archbishops' Council and House of Bishops to support the development of an independent safeguarding oversight body.

### 2023

- June - [Archbishops' Council statement](#) on the future of the ISB
- July - Professor Alexis Jay, former IICSA chair, [commissioned to look at proposals](#) for independent safeguarding scrutiny and other related issues of independence.
- September - [Interim Commissioner announced](#) to ensure case reviews promised by the former ISB can continue.
- December - [Independent Review from Sarah Wilkinson published](#) into first phase of Church's ISB

### 2024

- [Response Group](#) on reviews announced
- A [motion to enter a period of engagement](#) on both the Jay and Wilkinson reviews was passed by General Synod by an overwhelming majority in February 2024
- [Publication of Jay Report](#)
- [Letter to Church Times](#) from chair of the Response Group

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