

Meg Munn, former MP and Government Minister, with a professional background in child and adult safeguarding issues, has been appointed as the first independent chair of the Church of England's National Safeguarding Panel (NSP). Meg attended her first Panel today where she was officially installed as Chair, taking over from Bishop Peter Hancock, the Church's lead safeguarding bishop.

Meg Munn is a qualified social worker with 20 years' experience and led children's social services in York before being elected as a Member of Parliament in 2001. She spent 14 years in Parliament and was a government minister; in 2010 she established and chaired the All-Party Child Protection Parliamentary Group having previously chaired the All-Party Voice Parliamentary Group which worked for the prevention of abuse of vulnerable adults. Stepping down from parliament in 2015, Meg became an independent governance consultant and non-executive director. She has been a member of the Methodist Church since her teenage years and lives in Yorkshire.

Members of the NSP, including survivors and senior representatives from other safeguarding charities and organisations, were part of the advisory panel in the interview process.

Commenting on her appointment Meg said: "I am delighted to be the first Independent Chair of the Church of England National Safeguarding Panel. The Church has recognised that it needs to radically improve its safeguarding of children and vulnerable people, and I will ensure that the panel holds it to account.

"I have a long engagement in the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults – starting as a practitioner, then senior manager, and as a Member of Parliament contributing to policy formation and legislation. I have always been an advocate of listening to children and vulnerable adults talk about their experiences, hearing directly what they are feeling and thinking.

"I have worked with survivors and have seen first-hand the impact, which can be devastating and lifelong. And it doesn't stop with the individual; families and friends can suffer agonizing pain, feeling they have failed to protect a child or vulnerable adult. The guilt never goes away.

"Society at large is slowly waking up to the fact that organisations that we should have been able to trust failed to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults. Institutions such as the Church of England need to be open and transparent about the past and develop good safeguarding practice for the future. But only deep cultural change can bring about the transformation that is needed.

"A determination to put in place measures to protect children and vulnerable adults is essential. It isn't because everyone is a potential abuser. It is because those intent on abuse will exploit any possibility to get close to those they want to abuse.

"Although am not an Anglican - I am a Christian and a Methodist. Over the next few months I will spend time learning about the Church of England so I have a more informed view of what needs to happen. I will work with those who advise the Church through the National Safeguarding Panel, to gather their thoughts on the path to take. Ensuring effective safeguarding is a challenge for an organisation that covers the country and has numerous clergy, lay people and volunteers. But if a Church which professes to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ does not do everything it can to protect the vulnerable, it is ignoring a core message of that gospel. Apologies for past wrongs will mean nothing."

Notes

The main purpose of the role of the Independent Chair will be to:

- Chair the National Safeguarding Panel and work closely with the National Safeguarding Adviser in preparation of the agenda and papers and functioning of the panel to achieving its aims
- Be a member of the National Safeguarding Steering Group as the independent chair of the NSP
- Meet at least three times per year with the National Safeguarding Adviser, Deputy NSA and Lead Bishop for Safeguarding and at least annually with the General Secretary to the Archbishops' Council to review progress in respect of the implementation of the NST Business Plan
- Maintain oversight on behalf of the panel of the implementation of key business attending other meetings as and when required and meet with panel members outside of the meetings as required
- Provide a level of independent scrutiny and challenge to the Church of England
- Direct engagement with independent Chairs of Diocesan Safeguarding at their annual network meeting and via regional meetings where possible

National Safeguarding Panel

The NSP was set up to provide vital reference and scrutiny from a range of voices, including survivors, on the development of policy and guidance. The Panel's members also include directors and chief executives of safeguarding charities and organisations, and church leaders and officers. It was set up, following the Chichester safeguarding reports, to resource the Church of England's leadership (Archbishops' Council and House of Bishops) with good high-level strategic advice and direction on safeguarding. Its main aims are to:

- Provide visible leadership and excellence
- Promote good safeguarding practice
- Support a survivor perspective

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