

Melissa Caslake, Executive Director of Children's Services for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and City of Westminster, has been appointed as the Church of England's first permanent Director of Safeguarding. She takes over from Sir Roger Singleton who took up an interim role at the beginning of the year.



Melissa has a strong professional background in adult and children's services over a 20-year career, with particular experience of child protection and safeguarding, and a track record of leading good and outstanding children's services in local authorities.

As executive director she has overseen the Bi-Borough response to non-current child sexual abuse and been the London lead Director of Children's Services for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, working with Government departments to develop a stronger national response. Melissa has overseen the provision of support for children affected by the Grenfell Tower fire, also reporting to the Government's Taskforce.

Prior to her current role she was Director of Family Services for the City of Westminster where she led the service to an Ofsted 'outstanding' rating in 2016. She was formerly a divisional director in the London Borough of Harrow and Director of Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion in the London Borough of Merton.

Melissa studied English at Oxford University followed by a Master's in social work at Exeter University; she also has a range of management and leadership qualifications including from the Warwick University Business School.

Commenting on her appointment Melissa said: "I am proud to be taking on the role of National Director of Safeguarding for the Church of England. My career has been dedicated to safeguarding vulnerable children and adults and helping families in need.

"I am determined to ensure that the Church is a safer place for all, and I look forward to applying my professional experience and expertise to this challenge."

William Nye, Secretary General to the Archbishops' Council, said: "I am delighted by the appointment of Melissa Caslake to this role. The Church of England has come a long way in improving its safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults in recent years, particularly since the establishment of the national safeguarding team in 2015. But there is much still to do, and the creation of a director post for safeguarding recognises that.

"We have been fortunate in the last few months to have Sir Roger Singleton filling the post on an interim basis and now to have someone with the experience and seniority of Melissa to fill the post on a permanent basis, and to take the national Church's safeguarding work to a new level. She will be an excellent addition to the Council's leadership team, and I am very pleased to welcome her to Church House."

Bishop Peter Hancock, the Church of England's lead safeguarding bishop, said: "I welcome the appointment of Melissa as the Church of England's first Director of Safeguarding. Her strong, professional background and experience will strengthen the National Team as it continues its work at a time of increasing demand. Melissa's appointment is part of our commitment to ensuring the Church is a safer place for all and she will take on leadership of the team as we approach our main IICSA hearing. I look forward to working with her in my role as lead safeguarding bishop."

Melissa's start date will be confirmed in due course.

More information

- [Statement on structure of National Safeguarding Team including letter from William Nye to College of Bishops](#)

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