

The Diocese of Salisbury was the first to be audited by INEQE and their report is published today. INEQE Safeguarding Group were appointed last year by the Archbishops' Council to carry out the next round of independent external audits of Church of England dioceses and cathedrals, starting in January 2024.

Independent safeguarding audits were first commissioned in 2015 and were commended by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, IICSA; one of IICSA's 2020 recommendations (No 8) was that independent external auditing of the Church's safeguarding policies and procedures, as well as the effectiveness of safeguarding practice in dioceses, cathedrals and other Church organisations, should continue. As with the original audits, all reports will be published along with a follow up action plan and both Bishopthorpe and Lambeth Palace will also continue to be part of the audit process.

Diocese of Salisbury press release

The first report from a new rollout of independent external audits of diocesan and Cathedral safeguarding practices has found that the Diocese of Salisbury places victims and survivors at the centre of its work, and that its "trauma informed approach is palpable".

The diocese is the first to be audited by INEQE Safeguarding Group, which was commissioned by the Archbishops' Council to audit all Church of England dioceses and Cathedrals from 2024.

In their conclusion, the auditors said: "During the audit, senior leaders demonstrated a willingness to open themselves to direct challenge and provided access to all areas and no questions were off limits. To the cynic, this may sound like rhetoric, but the real strength in Salisbury is its people. From the leadership teams to the volunteers, there was an absence of hubris, no defensiveness and a desire to learn.

"Much of this can be directly attributed to the leadership of the Bishop. He is a relentless advocate of safeguarding and his commitment is demonstrated by deeds not just words. However, their greatest overall strength and potential lies in the fact that Salisbury's safeguarding practice is built on a foundation provided by their in-house professional safeguarding team. A team that has grown in numbers, confidence and competence since 2020. A team that places victims and survivors, the young and the vulnerable at the centre of what they do. Their commitment to a trauma informed approach was palpable.

"Continuing to invest in their impressive improvement journey will be key to their success."

The audit was carried out by a team from INEQE in January this year. They found that at parish level a culture of safeguarding was firmly embedded. Parish staff and volunteers said they felt able to speak 'truth to power' and raise concerns.

Auditors said a minority disagreed with this, which was "unsurprising" in a diocese the size of Salisbury. They suggested that the diocese

continues to build on its “solid foundation ... to ensure that as many people as possible across its footprint feel respected, valued and able to engage at all levels”.

The Bishop of Salisbury, the Rt Revd Stephen Lake, welcomed the report.

He said: “Salisbury is the first diocese to undergo a safeguarding audit by INEQE. We are grateful for their professional rigour and welcome the report.

“Safeguarding is both a right and a Gospel imperative. I am grateful for our safeguarding team and their commitment to being survivor led and trauma informed and I am very thankful for the ministry of our many volunteer parish safeguarding officers. This audit will act as a springboard to continue and deepen our practices and policies.”

Notes

- August 2023 - [Next round of independent safeguarding audits](#)
- List of reports as published - [INEQE independent audits](#)

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