

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) and the Church of England

Parish Q&A

Background

[IICSA](#) (Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse) was set up in 2015 because of serious concerns that some organisations in England and Wales had failed and were continuing to fail to protect children. Being independent means the Inquiry is not part of government and being statutory, means it has the power to compel witnesses to give evidence. It will make practical recommendations to ensure better protection for children in the future.

How does the Church fit in?

The '[Anglican Church](#)' in England and Wales is one of the 14 areas being investigated and its main focus will be the Church of England. The Inquiry is assessing the appropriateness of its safeguarding and child protection policies and practice. There have already been two public hearings with [Chichester Diocese and Bishop Peter Ball](#) as case studies. The overall hearing into the Church begins on 1 July 2019.

[Read IICSA's report](#) on the two case studies published May 2019

How does the Inquiry work?

The Archbishops' Council of the Church of England is a [core participant](#) in the Inquiry. There are other core participants including survivors who have been abused by clergy and other church officers. The National Safeguarding Team, (NST) is leading, on behalf of the Church, to IICSA's requests for information and witness statements. Preliminary hearings are held before each public hearing to set out lines of inquiry and final details.

[Read more about the wider Church hearing in July.](#)

How has the Church responded?

IICSA welcomed the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury for the Inquiry to investigate, as a matter of priority, the sexual abuse of children within the Church. The NST, working closely with dioceses, cathedrals and religious communities, has been responding in a constructive and transparent way to IICSA's request for information and statements and we have provided thousands of documents. The Inquiry has acknowledged our cooperative approach.

Will the Inquiry affect my church?

On a day-to-day basis safeguarding within our churches will continue to follow the policy and guidance approved by the [House of Bishops](#) so that our churches, services and activities are as safe places as possible. There will quite rightly be scrutiny and coverage of where we got it wrong and lessons we can learn and there are always improvements to be made. In 2018 the Church appointed Meg Munn as [the independent chair of the National Safeguarding Panel](#) and in 2019 appointed its [first permanent national director of safeguarding](#), Melissa Caslake.

If you are concerned that someone you know is at risk of, or is being abused, or presents a risk to others, please seek advice from your parish safeguarding officer or in an emergency your Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser. If necessary, report the matter to the local authority social care services or to the police without delay.

If you have general questions about the IICSA process and your parish that have not been answered here, please email: safeguarding@churchofengland.org