

# Diocesan Self-Assessment Key Safeguarding Data 2015-2017

## **Background**

The data presented in this report is taken from annual safeguarding returns, collected by dioceses from 2015-17 and sent to the National Safeguarding Team. This is the first time that trends have been analysed over a three-year period.

Each diocese will have responded to the self-assessment questions based on information from their own parishes and other sources and should be viewed in this context.

The diocesan self-assessment process has been an evolving tool, and the results have only been collated nationally since 2015. The commitment is now to produce an update each year with further refinements on the self-assessment process.

## Introduction

The Church of England consists of more than 16,000 churches across the country; with around 1.14 million adults and children making up the regular worshipping community. This means it comes into contact with vast numbers of children, young people and adults every day of the week and safeguarding them is a priority. The majority of safeguarding-related concerns or allegations relate to children or vulnerable adults who attend or who have contact with the Church and their lives within the community. An eighth of all concerns relate to clergy; just over 300. There are currently around 20,000 active clergy in the Church.

It will also include those who have been assessed, either by statutory agencies or by the Church, as likely to pose a risk to others. Such risks need to be managed often in collaboration with statutory partners. Every diocese now has at least one professional Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) to whom all concerns or allegations relating to church officers (lay or clergy, paid or unpaid) must be reported. Their role is to support the diocese in implementing its safeguarding responsibilities, working closely with parish safeguarding officers. As well as responding to the needs of children and adults who may be at risk of abuse, DSAs provide professional advice to promote the welfare of people in the Church community.

The data provides evidence of the importance of the Church's role in safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults in the community as well as increased awareness of safeguarding issues within the Church, in part due to an extensive national training programme introduced from 2016. The National Safeguarding Team estimates that over 230,000 training places have been completed across dioceses since its introduction.<sup>1</sup>

In any report about data of this nature, it is important to recognise that behind each statistic is a person. Safeguarding is about everyone's wellbeing and means the action the Church takes to promote a safer culture; it is about valuing every person as made in God's image.

---

<sup>1</sup> It is not possible to state how many people have completed safeguarding training as some people due to their role will have completed more than one safeguarding module in accordance with the national Safeguarding Training and Development Framework.

## KEY HEADLINES

- OVERALL THE NUMBER OF CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS REPORTED TO DIOCESES RELATING TO CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS IN THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY ROSE BY 1092 FROM 2015 TO 2017
- OF THE 3287 CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS REPORTED IN 2017, LESS THAN 25% RELATE TO CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS IN RESPECT OF A CHURCH OFFICER
- 12% OF ALL CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS REPORTED IN 2017 RELATED TO CLERGY
- THE LARGEST INCREASE RELATES TO CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS IN RESPECT OF ADULTS AT RISK OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT, A 78% RISE OVER THREE YEARS; CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS IN RELATION TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FELL SLIGHTLY IN 2017
- THE PROPORTION OF CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS WHICH REQUIRED REPORTING TO STATUTORY AGENCIES HAS REMAINED FAIRLY STATIC OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS AT AROUND A THIRD OF ALL CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS
- IN 2017, DIOCESES WERE MANAGING OVER 1,000 SAFEGUARDING AGREEMENTS FOR PEOPLE WHO ATTEND A WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY AND MAY POSE A RISK TO OTHERS

*These statistics are explained in more detail overleaf*

## DEFINITIONS

**Concern** - Safeguarding concerns are matters relating to an individual and reported to the DSA for guidance or action; this may or may not result in a referral to statutory agencies.

**Safeguarding agreement** - a written agreement used to establish clear boundaries for those who may pose a risk to others and want to attend church services and activities.

**Church Officer** - anyone appointed/elected by or on behalf of the Church to an office, post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid.

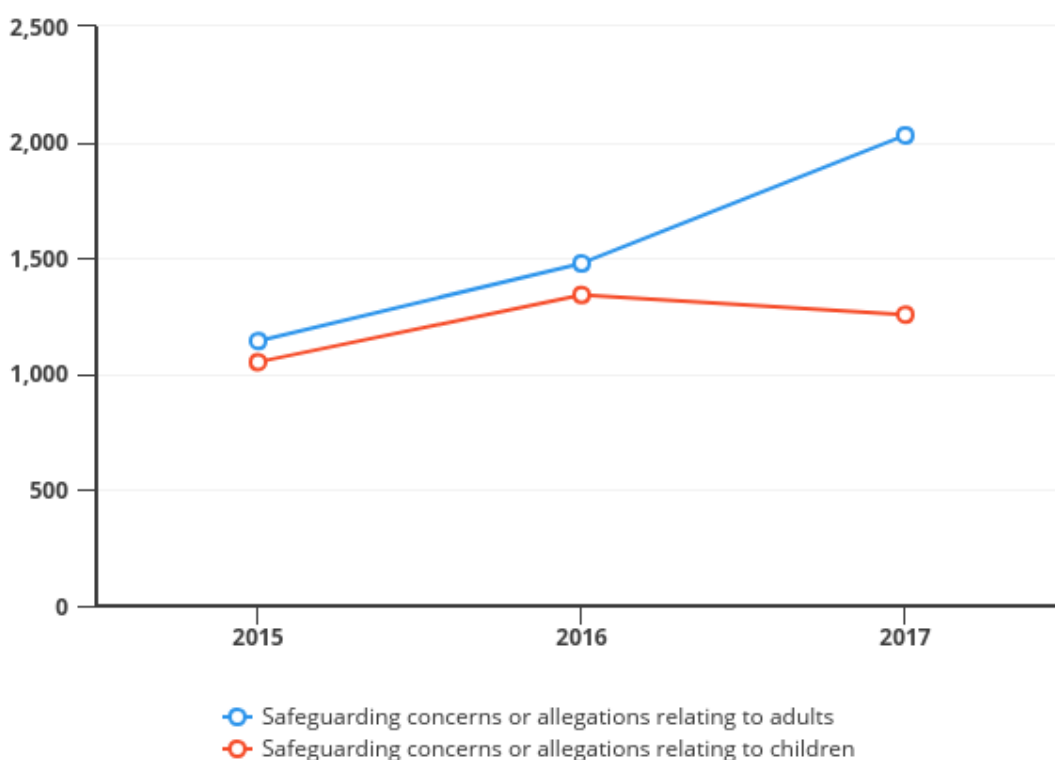
For more information on definitions see [Safeguarding glossary](#)

## All safeguarding concerns and allegations

The overall number of safeguarding related concerns or allegations in respect of children or adults reported to dioceses significantly increased over the three-year period between 2015 and 2017 (see Figure 1). In 2015, a total of 2195 concerns or allegations were reported to the dioceses. In 2016 this figure rose to 2820 and in 2017, 3287 concerns or allegations were reported to the dioceses.<sup>2</sup>

During this period new House of Bishops' guidance was introduced which requires all parishes to have a safeguarding officer, all dioceses to have DSAs who must have a professional qualification, and for all clergy to undergo regular safeguarding training.

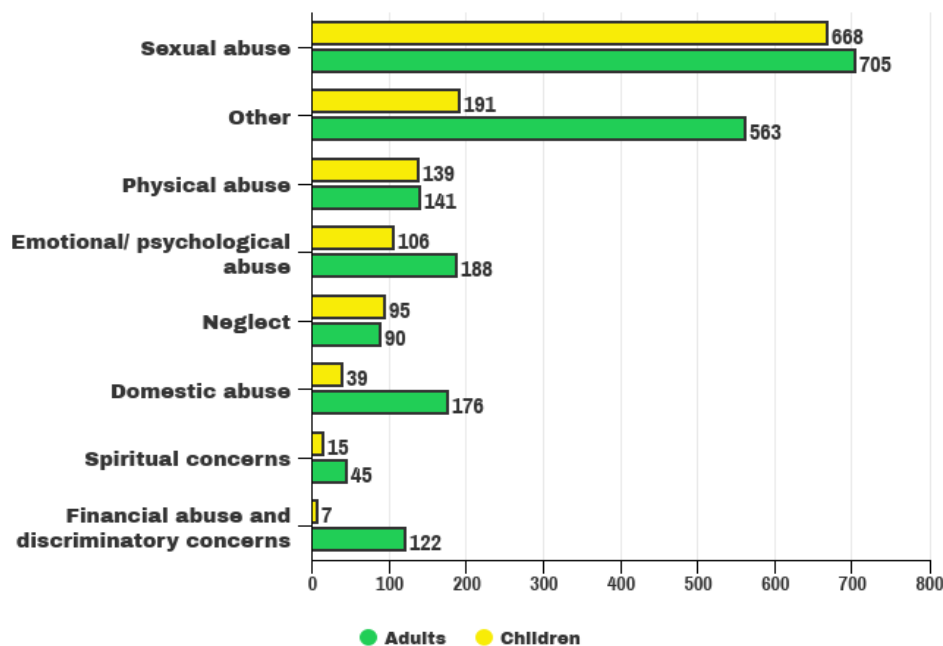
**Figure 1: Numbers of reported safeguarding concerns or allegations relating to children and adults from 2015-2017**



<sup>2</sup> Concerns/allegations were reported during the year but the incidents that they relate to may not necessarily have occurred during that year – they are both current and non-current.

In terms of types of abuse, the largest category of concerns or allegations relating to both children and vulnerable adults relates to sexual abuse (42%) (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Nature of reported safeguarding concerns or allegations relating to children and adults in 2017**



### Concerns or allegations relating to the safeguarding of children

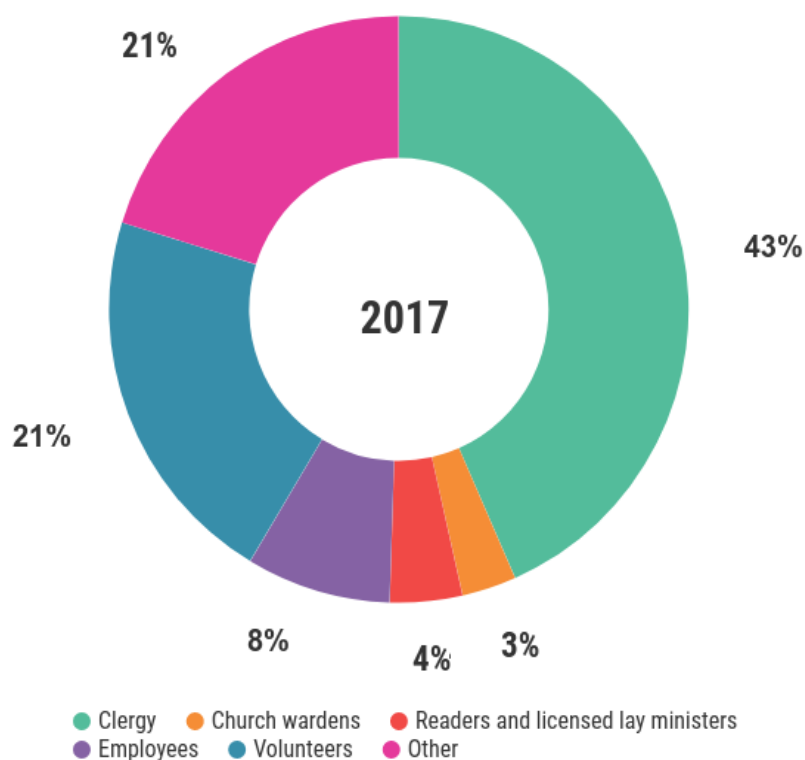
The overall number of safeguarding concerns or allegations about children rose from 1052 in 2015 to 1342 in 2016 but fell slightly in 2017 to 1257. In 2017, as in previous years, the majority of safeguarding concerns or allegations relating to children were related to sexual abuse, accounting for 53% of the total. However, though the number of concerns or allegations related to sexual abuse of children rose significantly (by 45%) from 2015 to 2016, in 2017 they had fallen by 20% from 838 in 2016 to 668 in 2017.

### Concerns or allegations relating to the safeguarding of adults

The number of concerns or allegations in respect of adult safeguarding issues has risen significantly year on year from 1143 in 2015 to 1478 in 2016 and 2030 in 2017, a rise of 78% since 2015. In 2017, as in the previous two years, the single largest category of concerns or allegations related to sexual abuse; 553 in 2015 (48%), to 620 in 2016 (42%) to 705 in 2017 (35%). The proportion of physical abuse, neglect, emotional and psychological concerns or allegations and domestic abuse also rose during this period. As well as including first reporting

of concerns or allegations about non-recent abuse, this may well reflect a growing understanding across the Church and wider society about vulnerability and adult-related abuse.

**Figure 3: Concerns or allegations against church officers (anyone appointed to a Church role, lay or ordained, paid or unpaid)**



Of the total number of concerns and allegations, 736 concerns or allegations (less than 22% of the total) were made against church officers in relation to both adults and children in 2017, compared to 799 in 2016 and 656 in 2015. The proportion of allegations against clergy has remained fairly static over the three years and accounts for around 12% of all concerns or allegations. In 2017, 43% of allegations against church officers related to clergy, compared to 45% in 2016 and 44% in 2015. The proportion of concerns or allegations against volunteers also remained fairly static at just over 20%. Individuals categorised as 'other' account for 21% of allegations against church officers in 2017, and the NST will be addressing this in the 2018 data collection. Figure 3 provides a further breakdown of the roles associated with concerns or allegations against church officers in 2017.

The number of allegations relating to sexual abuse by church officers has fallen to its lowest level for three years; 457 in 2017 compared to 537 in 2016 and 493 in 2015. Nevertheless, this consistently remains the largest category of abuse amounting to 62% of all allegations against church officers in 2017. Allegations of psychological and emotional abuse have risen year on year and in 2017 accounted for 15% of all allegations against church officers. Physical abuse is the 3rd largest category accounting for 8% of all allegations. The number of allegations of domestic abuse has risen year on year accounting for 6% of all allegations.

### **Outcomes of concerns or allegations**

Of the 3287 safeguarding concerns or allegations relating to children and adults in 2017, 912 (28%) were reported to statutory agencies.

The data does not presently capture individuals who have been referred to the Church by statutory partners, for example those who are subject to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements or who have come to the attention of statutory agencies for other reasons.

In all cases, the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser will make a decision as to whether to refer to statutory agencies in accordance with legal requirements, their professional judgement, and locally agreed multi-agency thresholds for referral to such agencies. All concerns and allegations are treated very seriously according to House of Bishops' ['Responding'](#) Guidance.

Disciplinary measures were taken in 72 cases in 2017, of which 39 were under the Clergy Disciplinary Measure and 33 under lay disciplinary procedures. This is broadly similar to 2016 (76 cases) but represents a significant increase from 2015 (38 cases). In 2017, 36 individuals were referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for consideration of barring compared to 46 in 2016 and 33 in 2015 (the majority of these cases are likely to be, but not necessarily, linked to child sexual abuse).

## **Risk assessments and safeguarding agreements**

There has been a steady upward trend in the number of risk assessments being undertaken by dioceses in accordance with House of Bishops' guidance. The vast majority of risk assessments relate to members of the congregation who are likely to pose a risk to children or vulnerable adults. In 2015 and 2016, these accounted for 91% of all risk assessments completed; in 2017 they accounted for 93%.

In 2015, 227 standard risk assessments were completed; in 2016 this rose to 315 and in 2017 to 511. Risk assessment guidance was first introduced in 2015 and updated in 2017.

The number of independent risk assessments, whilst relatively small, has also risen year on year from 21 in 2015, of which 15 (71%) related to clergy; to 27 in 2016 of which 19 (70%) related to clergy, to 35 in 2017, of which 27 (77%) related to clergy. [Regulations relating to independent risk assessments](#) came into force in 2017.

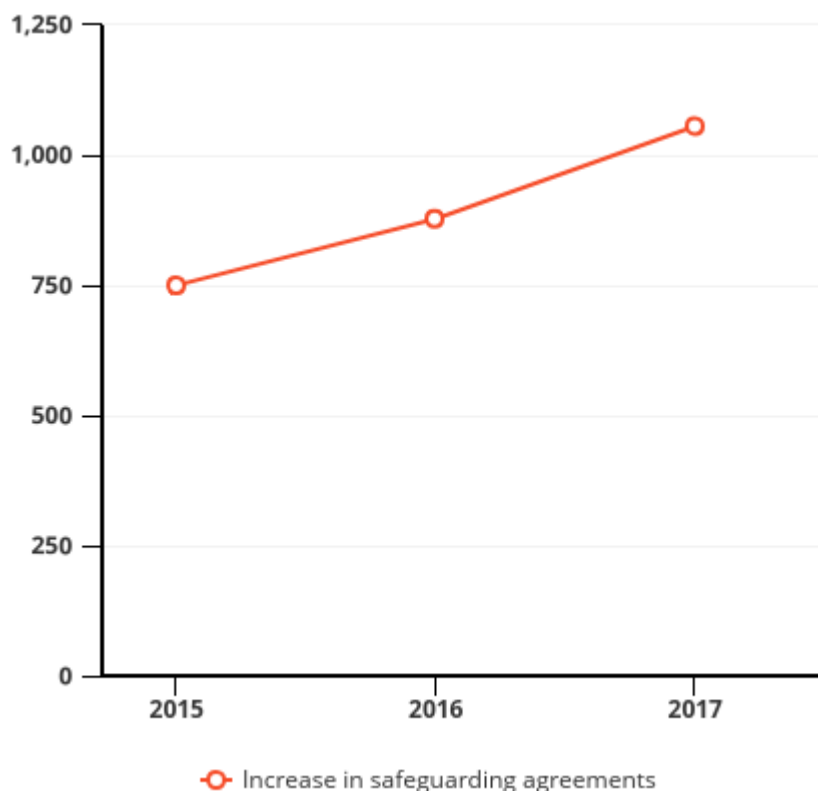
The number of Safeguarding Agreements put in place for known offenders or those who may pose a risk has also risen over the last three years from 750 in 2015 to 878 in 2016 to 1056 in 2017 (see Figure 4). Agreements generally are ongoing, although subject to review, and therefore the number is unlikely to decrease.

It is likely that this increase reflects the increasing professionalism and resources within dioceses, stronger working relationships with statutory partners, in particular those responsible for public protection, and a greater understanding of the importance of risk management.

[Further information on risk assessments](#) (see p54)



**Figure 4: Numbers of Safeguarding Agreements 2015-2017**



## Conclusion

The Church of England is involved in every community and can potentially play an important role in the safeguarding of children and vulnerable people in our society. Everyone who participates in the life of the Church has a role to play in promoting a Safer Church for all.

The House of Bishops' safeguarding policy states: "Safeguarding means the action the Church takes to promote a safer culture. This means we will promote the welfare of children, young people and adults, work to prevent abuse from occurring, seek to protect those that are at risk of being abused and respond well to those that have been abused. We will take care to identify where a person may present a risk to others, and offer support to them whilst taking steps to mitigate such risks".

The collation and analysis of this data forms a key element of quality assurance work undertaken by the National Safeguarding Team, which was formed in 2015. It will be used to inform current and future planning and improvement activity. For more information about the work of the National Safeguarding Team please visit

[www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding](http://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding).