

National Safeguarding Standards and Quality Assurance Framework: Consultation Report

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Methodology and Responses

The National Safeguarding Standards Consultation began at the beginning of May 2023.

Presentations were given to Safeguarding Advisors/Officers at the National Safeguarding Team monthly drop-in and to Cathedral colleagues at the Cathedral Safeguarding Network. These presentations included an unveiling of the draft Safeguarding Standards Document, an introduction to how they were created and could be used, as well as directing people to the survey that had been set up to provide feedback on the document and individual Standards.

A webpage was created to outline the above information (particularly for those who had not attended any presentations to date) and included a Standards video, the draft Standards Document and a link to the survey to provide feedback.

An e-mail was sent to all Safeguarding Advisors/Officers, Bishops, Deans, Diocesan Secretaries, Chief Operation Officers and DSAP Chairs requesting them to take part in the consultation via the webpage, and to share the link with any relevant and interested parties.

The consultation was live for a month and 110 responses to the survey were received. These responses included:

- 36 Diocesan Responses (including Safeguarding Advisors, Bishops and Diocesan Secretaries)
- 22 Cathedral Responses (including Safeguarding Advisors, Deans and Chief Operating Officers)
- 9 Responses from Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panels (DSAPs)
- 13 Responses from Victims and Survivors
- 30 Parish Responses (including Parish Safeguarding Officers and Clergy)

An online consultation with the National Safeguarding Panel was also undertaken, the subsequent online blog written by the Chair of the National Safeguarding Panel can be found here:

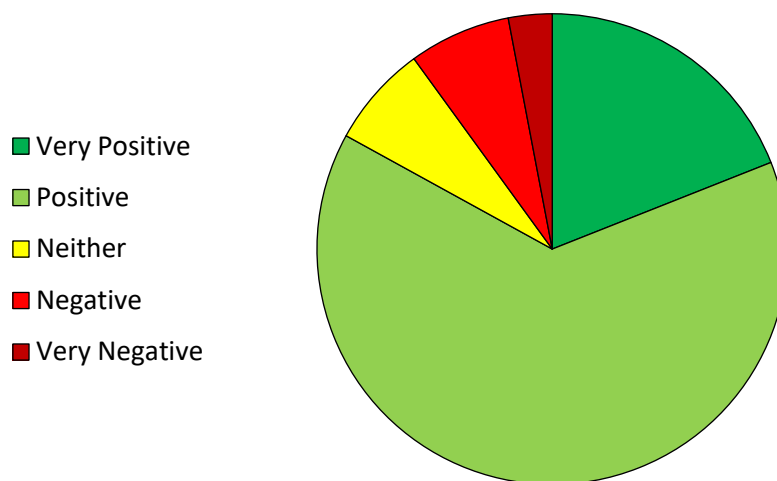
<https://chairnsp.org/2023/06/06/consultation-on-national-standards/>

The survey itself asked for impressions of the individual Standards as well as of the overall document itself. Opportunities were also given to offer general comments, suggestions of gaps within each individual Standard, and potential tweaks or changes to the 'What Good Looks Like' indicators.

The Standards Document Overall

The Standards Document was well received within the consultation. This can be seen in Figure 1, where the majority of responses to the document were positive (83%; 19% very positive; 64% positive). There were a small proportion of responses that were negative (10%; 3% very negative; 7% negative).

Figure 1: A pie chart highlighting the percentage responses that participants had to the Overall Standards Document.



There were slightly different responses to the question, depending on which group was responding, which can be seen below:

- Diocese (79% Positive, 9% Negative)
- Cathedral (100% Positive)
- DSAPs (100% Positive)
- Victims and Survivors (69% Positive, 23% Negative)
- Parish (76% Positive, 14% Negative)

Table 1 highlights particular ways that people reacted to the Standards document, with almost three quarters of responses finding the document clear and concise (73%) and able to improve safeguarding practice (73%), while two thirds suggested that the document will improve consistency of safeguarding (66%). A quarter of responses found the document to be overwhelming (25%), although over half of the responses disagreed with this (57%).

Table 1: A table showing the percentage responses to questions regarding the Overall Standards Document.

This document...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Is clear and concise	24%	49%	12%	13%	2%
Is overwhelming	9%	16%	18%	39%	18%
Will improve consistency	19%	47%	22%	6%	6%
Will improve safeguarding practice	16%	57%	15%	6%	6%

Comments

The comments offered by participants do help to explain some of the answers above. There were many comments across all groups alluding to how clear and comprehensive the document is. As mentioned above, responses from Cathedrals and DSAPs were particularly positive, and their comments in this regard were also similar, with multiple responses dictating that this was a “huge step forward”. This theme was also carried across all groups, with one diocesan secretary writing “This is exactly what I have needed for a number of years”.

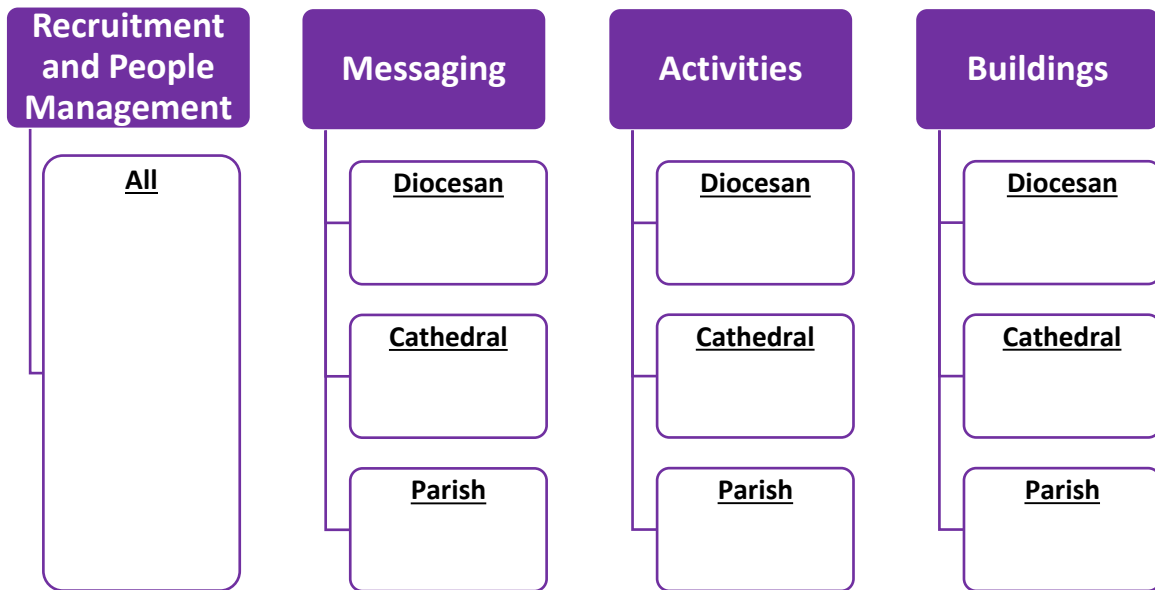
One aspect mentioned numerous times was around the tools being created to help to evidence or measure some of the indicators. Many responses suggested that they were “looking forward” and “excited”(!), to start using the tools. One Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor/Officer suggested that knowing the tools were being developed centrally by the NST helped to relieve anxieties about how to start this work.

However, not all responses were comprehensively positive, there were some extremely useful pieces of constructive criticism, or questions that need answering. These points mostly fell under four different key themes, as outlined below.

Context

One of the reasons that the document seems to be labelled as overwhelming by some, is that there are places where it is not clear how each indicator relates to each context (whether that be diocesan, cathedral, parish, or even nationally within the National Safeguarding Team). It is suggested that it may be a “sizeable task in itself to establish exactly what a diocese is responsible for vs. what a parish is responsible for”. Therefore, once approved, we will look to add a clear methodology outlining what is expected for each context (e.g., dioceses, cathedrals, parishes, and the NST). The way in which this may be presented can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2: An example of how the ‘What Good Looks Like’ indicators can be presented to help to signify exactly what is expected for each context in the Prevention Standard, split by theme.



Capacity

It has been highlighted that embedding and evidencing the Standards could be “quite a big task” and questions have been asked as to whether diocesan teams and parishes have the resource and capacity to undertake this work effectively. Two parish responses stated that this work would be achievable with a “competent PSO” but directed that this is “very difficult to come by”.

It is hoped that in highlighting exactly what each indicator means for each context, as well as the collaboration with existing resources (e.g., the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard) and the creation of tools to aid the evidencing and measuring of the standards, that this task is not seen as unsuitably vast.

The Standards providing a simple framework to manage safeguarding in the Church

A key comment was that this is “just another policy document”, something that is adding to the “exhausting flow of changed requirements and new materials”. It was suggested that in the long-term it may be easy to lose the Standards in amongst other documents and initiatives, and that we need to all be following “in the same direction”.

We have now conducted exercises which show that all safeguarding activity in the Church (whether at parish, diocesan or national level) relates to one or more Standard. In other words, the five Standards provide a simple and clear framework that connects and integrates disparate safeguarding activity. The chart below shows how the commitments of Promoting a Safer Church, Safeguarding Code / Guidance, learning pathways and modules and the IICSA Recommendations link to the Standards.

Figure 3: An example structure highlighting how the five Standards provide the golden thread for all safeguarding activity. It shows the five Standards across the top and areas of activity down the side.

	1. Culture, Leadership and Capacity	2. Prevention	3. Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk	4. Victims and Survivors	5. Learning, Supervision and Support
'Promoting a safer church' Commitments	PASC Commitment 1	PASC Commitment 1 and 2	PASC Commitments 3, 5 and 6	PASC Commitment 4	PASC Commitments 1 and 2
Relevant Guidance and Code	- Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse - Key Roles and Responsibilities - Safeguarding Practice Reviews	- Safer Recruitment and People Management - Code of Safer Working Practice - Safer Environment and Activities - Parish Safeguarding Handbook	- Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults - Responding to, assessing and managing concerns or allegations - Safeguarding Serious Incident Reporting	- Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse	- Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework
Safeguarding Learning	- Basic - Foundation - Leadership - Senior Leadership	- Safer Recruitment and People Management - Domestic Abuse	- Risk Assessment - Link Person Training	- Support Person Training - Survivors Brief Symposium	- PSO Induction - DSO/CSO Development - Trainers Development
Safeguarding Programme and IICSA Recommendations	- Advisor to Officer Role Change (IICSA Rec. 1) - Independent External Audits (IICSA Rec. 8) - Development of a Research and Evaluation Function	- Independent External Audits (IICSA Rec. 8)	- Reviewing Clergy Discipline Measure (IICSA Rec. 2) - Information Sharing Project (IICSA Recs. 5 and 6) - National Casework Management System - Past Cases Review 2 (PCR2) - National Casework Team	- Redress Scheme (IICSA Rec. 7) - Interim Support Scheme - Safe Spaces - Survivor Engagement	- Professional Supervision to Safeguarding Officers (IICSA Rec. 1)

Accountability

A key question that comes out of this is “who is accountable?” and “how are these upheld?”. These questions come from all groups but are particularly pertinent with the Victims and Survivors that took part in this consultation. Many suggested that the document itself is good, but that the Standards “need to be enforced”, “need to be adhered to”, and that people need to be “held accountable over their performance and ability to meet the Standards”.

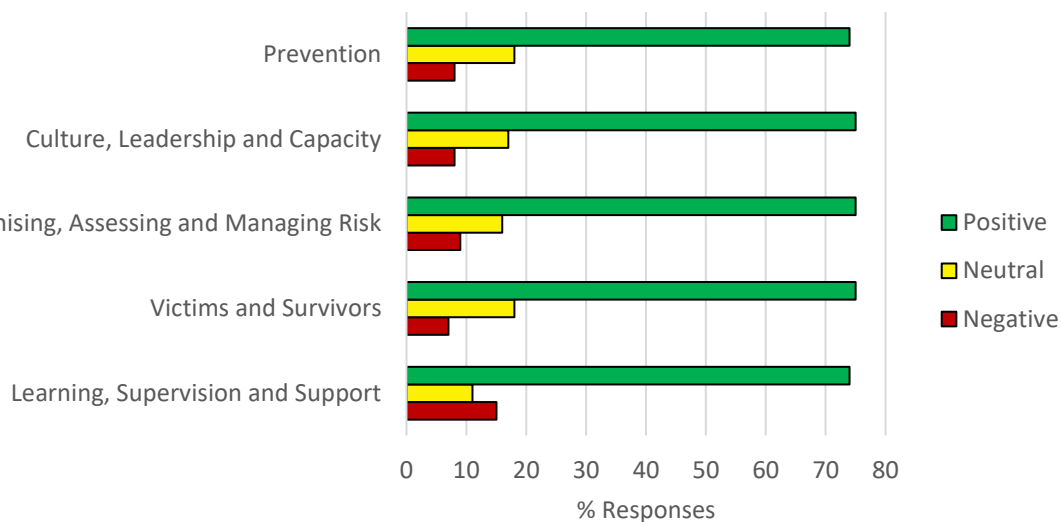
In responding to these points, the first thing to recognise is the part the Standards and their ‘What Good Looks Like’ Indicators play. It is important to state that it is the House of Bishop’s Guidance and Safeguarding Code that are the aspects of safeguarding that are enforceable and must be adhered to, what the Standards will help to do is establish how good safeguarding practice is and create a framework for exploring this.

In creating this framework, including the tools to measure these Standards, we will enable a consistent way of measuring safeguarding practice on a local level (by senior leadership teams, DSAPs, and PCCs). Subsequently, this framework will be the foundation upon which the five-yearly, independent audits will be based, thus deepening the level of scrutiny into how well the Standards are being met.

Individual Standards

Analysis of the responses to each Standard individually follows a similar pattern to the overall document, with reactions to each of the Standards being labelled as ‘positive’ or ‘very positive’ by around three-quarters of participants (which can be seen in Figure 4).

Figure 4: A bar chart showing the percentage breakdown of responses that participants had to each individual Standard.



Many of the comments offered for each of the individual standards reflected the same themes as the overall document. The vast majority of comments were positive, highlighting how each standard was “clear”, “comprehensive”, “helpful” and “user friendly”.

There were also many comments highlighting how there could be some confusion about which indicators are related to individual contexts (dioceses, cathedrals, parishes, etc.), which has been addressed above.

There were many incredibly helpful suggestions of gaps within individual standards, tweaks or changes to the ‘what good looks like’ indicators, and recommended resources. Many of these have been taken onboard and are reflected within the final version of the Standards. There were some comments and suggestions that were more common and require a deeper reflection, which are outlined below.

The importance of the Culture Standard

Comments on the Culture Standard reinforced its importance. One diocesan response stated that “culture is essential to get right as it encourages transparency and positive environments in which people feel safe”. A cathedral response said “the establishment of a positive safeguarding culture is

foundational for effective safeguarding in all its aspects”, and a parish response stated that culture “should be at the heart of every community” and “is such a vital ingredient in the safeguarding of all”. One response further suggested that the Culture Standard should be the first Standard seen in the document, as “everything related to safeguarding stems from it”.

This is a compelling and reasonable argument and the moving of the Culture Standard to being the first within the final Standards Document will be actioned.

Being aware of and responding to different types of abuse

It is important to include a ‘what good looks like’ indicator concerning the different types of abuse that people can experience, many comments within the consultation mentioned the need to address domestic and spiritual abuse, and even those who made these suggestions were unsure of where it should sit. It could be placed within any of the five standards (particularly Prevention, Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk, and Victims and Survivors). It is felt that for now, the best place to house this particular indicator is within Prevention under the ‘Messaging’ theme. The thought process is to focus the ‘raising awareness’ of these types of abuse, which will in-turn allow individuals to respond more effectively.

Integration with the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard

Working closely with the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard (in particular with the Prevention Standard) is welcomed in the comments, especially from parish responses. Many suggest that this is not only a way of “removing the duplication of work” but that it should also give dioceses “easy evidence that indicators are being met”. However, it is also mentioned that not all dioceses use the dashboard, and this needs to be given some thought. To help with this, effort will be made to create another tool or resource to enable parishes to show how well they are meeting the Standards if they do not have access to the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard.

The victim and survivor experience survey

There is a lot of positivity surrounding the creation of a ‘victim and survivor experience survey’ that allows feedback to be given on the experience of disclosure and receiving support. Many of the positive comments come from victims and survivors, with some saying “I have been asking for this for years”, “good to see the opportunity to give feedback via the experience survey”, and “I wish that this existed when I was going through the process”. There is still an anxiety that the Standards will not be adhered to; surmised by one comment on the experience survey of “I’d be surprised if dioceses do this”, but it is suggested that “by at least having the survey on the page, we can ask for it”.

Supervision and support for clergy

The suggestion of supervision for clergy is a slightly controversial one in the comments. There are a few who do not favour it, with comments such as “reflective supervision for all clergy has never been accepted by the church”, “this feels very premature”, and “I can see this being useful for those who need it, but it should not be an entitlement for all”. There are also a few questions on the funding, expertise, capacity and sustainability of this indicator.

There are also many comments favouring this, and elaborating on why, such as “this is vital, we cannot wait until damage is done, secondary trauma is a real outcome for clergy”, “the current pastoral support of clergy is appalling”, “the effects on clergy has certainly been overlooked in the past” and “without adequate supervision and support for clergy, the rest of this document is just words, they are currently left to cope alone”.

There is potential here that simply having the word ‘supervision’ may be setting off alarm bells for those with trepidations, especially those who mention that “generally the National Safeguarding Team is Social Work oriented”. Therefore, the term ‘supervision’ has been removed from the theme of ‘Clergy Support’. We want to make clear what is desired from any provided support and have amended the relevant ‘What Good Looks Like’ indicator to focus on the outcomes for clergy. Examples of how this support could be provided (including those places where it is already happening) will be made available in the ‘resources’ section. The hope is that this will alleviate anxieties by giving scope and freedom of thought about how this can be provided.

There are also suggestions that the provision of supervision to clergy is not enough, that it should be more ambitious. Firstly, by making this supervision mandatory and not aspirational, and then that it should be provided to a wider specific range of roles in the church, for example, Lay ministers, pastoral workers, PSOs.

The opportunity to provide this level of support to a wider range of roles within the church is certainly commendable, and an idea that should be wholeheartedly supported. However, it is thought that for now, the Standards should set out an achievable clear direction of travel in this, and it is felt that this is one that ensures that clergy are well supported. Once those processes are in place, there may be scope to extend this practice to ensure that supervision and support can be offered to everybody.