



Wilkinson Jay Response Group – Emerging Proposals



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND



Background and Context

- In July 2024 General Synod asked the lead safeguarding bishop and the Response Group to evaluate four models for organisational structures of safeguarding independence.
- The Response Group oversaw a feasibility assessment of the four models, studying the models carefully, considering HR, data protection, legal factors, (among others), and input from victims and survivors, safeguarding professionals, Synod members and others.
- The Response Group also oversaw fieldwork and research. This feedback from thousands affected by or involved in Church safeguarding has been incorporated into the Response Group's work.
- You can find more information about the first phase of this project in the [July 2024 Synod Paper](#).



Background and Context

- In November, at a residential meeting and in a further meeting, the Response Group analysed the feasibility assessments.
- After much discussion and work together, the Response Group has now advised the Lead Bishop to undertake more detailed analysis of models 3 and 4.
- These models have been developed since [General Synod in July 2024](#), in response to insights gathered and the technical analysis undertaken. They have changed since then, and will continue to change as work continues towards General Synod in February 2025.

Next Steps

- Feedback on the models has been collected from the Church of England's governance bodies (the Archbishops' Council and the House of Bishops) and **the models will be developed further in light of their advice. No decision has been taken.**
- A transition plan assessing the consequences of implementation and delivery of the models is also in development for both models, to help us understand the work that will be required to make changes to organisational structures and to plan to continue to serve people well during transition in whichever model is adopted.
- The revised models, rationale, and analysis will be published in full when the papers for General Synod in February 2025 are published this coming January (2025).
- The Lead Bishop intends to bring both models to General Synod in February 2025, and General Synod will be asked to choose between the two options.

Both Models – Scrutiny Functions

- In their work, the Response Group has now established broad consensus that any future structure must include independence in relation to safeguarding audit, scrutiny, and complaints functions.
- Both models incorporate a Scrutiny Body, which may include the following functions:
 - Commissioning or delivering safeguarding inspections and audits;
 - Undertaking a scheduled programme of thematic reviews;
 - Monitoring the implementation of safeguarding policies;
 - Subject to further detailed work, it could also monitor, and quality assure accreditation of safeguarding practitioners.
- The Scrutiny Body should also provide a final stage resolution function to resolve complaints, according to agreed and published eligibility criteria.
- The Scrutiny Body would be created as a statutory body. Legislation would provide it with powers and corresponding duties upon Church bodies.

Model 3 – Operational Delivery

- **This is still in development and is likely to alter further before proposals are submitted to General Synod. No decision has been taken.**
- All diocesan and cathedrals safeguarding teams remain in their current structures and there are no direct changes to their terms of employment. National safeguarding functions and staff transfer outside Archbishops' Council to a separate organisation.
- The Synod, advised by the House and Archbishops' Council, will govern policy and legislation.
- Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panels (DSAPs) provide scrutiny over safeguarding work in dioceses, parishes and cathedrals, and are renamed to reflect this. The DSAP Chair also acts as the first point of escalation for complaints, if a complaint has not been resolved locally, subject to eligibility criteria.
- Rationale: to enable more consistent scrutiny and practice, and to address perceptions of conflict of interest

Model 4 – Operational Delivery

- **This is still in development and is likely to alter further before proposals are submitted to General Synod. No decision has been taken.**
- All safeguarding teams, including diocesan and national staff, transfer to a separate nationwide organisation with independent governance.
- The external delivery body operates independently from the Church and makes its own operational decisions as to the best ways to deliver safeguarding according to what is already set out in practice and code.
- The Synod, advised by the House and Archbishops' Council, will govern policy and legislation.
- Local professionals remain embedded within dioceses and cathedrals but are line-managed by the external delivery body.
- Rationale: to enable consistency centrally, and to address perceptions of conflict of interest at local and national level.



Transition to a new model

- We are working carefully to understand the implications and consequences of transition to a new model, recognising that no decisions about the models, or potential consequences of transition to a new model, has commenced or will commence until firm proposals are agreed by General Synod.
- Some options may require legislation, commissioning, new structures, or complex change, and will require detailed proposals and planning, especially around the governance of new organisations. Implementation may take time, and this will need to be worked through carefully.
- Any period of transition needs to be managed well, with appropriate resources and skills allocated to each workstream.



Support Available

- We recognise that this is a very uncertain time and that the subject matter of safeguarding may be difficult or distressing for some people. We highlight some support that is available below.
- If you or anyone else is in immediate danger of harm, **contact the emergency services on 999**.
- For non-emergency enquiries, the police can be contacted on **101**. More information about how to contact the police can be found [here](#).
- The **Safe Spaces Helpline** provides free, independent and confidential support to anyone who has been abused by someone in the Church. They can be contacted on **0300 303 1056**. <https://safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk/>.
- **CALM** provides free, confidential and anonymous support for people struggling with their mental health. They can be contacted on **0800 58 58 58**, by live chat or WhatsApp. <https://www.thecalmzone.net/get-support>
- **Samaritans** offer free, 24 hour support through their helpline, **116 123**. <https://www.samaritans.org/>