



# SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL REPORT



DIOCESE OF  
SHREWSBURY

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# MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP

Safeguarding is a task and commitment to which every member of the Church is called. Safeguarding is part of proclaiming the Gospel, for in all our efforts to care and protect the most vulnerable we give witness to Christ. The same Jesus, the Eternal Son of God who became vulnerable and defenceless as a tiny child entrusted to Our Lady and Saint Joseph.

Today we can be grateful for so many in our Shrewsbury Diocese who serve the Church's mission in safeguarding, helping to make the home and family of the Church the safest of places for the young and the most vulnerable. We are thankful too for the invaluable network of volunteers and team of professionals at parish and diocesan level who help us all put safeguarding into practice in our communities and remind us of our shared responsibilities.

With my thanks to everyone who is part of the Church's safeguarding mission today,

"Serve one another in works of love, since the whole Law is summarised in a single command; 'Love your neighbour as yourself'  
" (Gal 5:13b-14)

**+Mark**

**Rt Rev Mark Davies**  
**Bishop of Shrewsbury**

# SAFEGUARDING GOVERNANCE

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and as such all Diocesan clergy, employees and volunteers have a role to play in ensuring that the Catholic Church is a safe place. Underpinning this are the governance structures within the Diocese to ensure that there is appropriate oversight and delivery of effective safeguarding in line with Canon Law, Charity Law and national standards, policies and protocols. The structures are:

**Bishop of Shrewsbury** - As the diocesan bishop and Chair of Trustees, Bishop Davies has the ultimate oversight of safeguarding. The Bishop supports the functions and activities of the Committees and the Safeguarding Office in their work with clergy, staff and volunteers, and support of victims and survivors.

**Board of Trustees** - These are the individuals appointed by the Bishop for the civil governance of the Diocese. The Board is comprised of three lay trustees, five clergy trustees, and Bishop Davies as Chair. The trustees have skills and experience that enable effective governance of the Diocese, including a nominated Trustee for Safeguarding who chairs the Safeguarding Sub-Committee.

**Safeguarding Sub-Committee** - This Sub-Committee of the Board of Trustees supports, assists and advises the Diocesan Trustees in discharging their duties in safeguarding. It is chaired by the nominated Trustee for Safeguarding and comprises the Vicar General (also a trustee), Diocesan Chancellor, Financial Secretary, and Safeguarding Co-Ordinator. The Sub-Committee also has professional advisors from Police, Probation and Childrens' Services LADO. The Sub-Committee makes regular report to meetings of the Board of Trustees. In turn, the Board of Trustees feeds back comments (if appropriate), and, if required, will direct the Sub-Committee to consider safeguarding matters where Trustees require additional information, explanations, or guidance.

**Risk Advisory Group** - This group advises on blemished Disclosure & Barring Service certificates, and relevant Safeguarding Self-Declarations to determine whether any further assessment/action is required. It also reviews specific case and Safeguarding Plans on a rolling basis in line with national CSSA policies and procedures. The Safeguarding Plans and casework presented to the Group for discussion will be those that meet a threshold of subject non-engagement that results in risk, or complex case management.

**Safeguarding Co-Ordinator** - Leads the safeguarding team within the Diocese and is the in-house professional advisor. The role of the Co-ordinator is the delivery of trustee strategy for safeguarding as well as being a point of contact and advice for clergy, staff, volunteers including parish safeguarding representatives, promoting safeguarding within the Diocese and externally, liaising with statutory authorities as appropriate and leading on the implementation of policy and procedure. One of the most important parts of the role is engagement with victims and survivors, providing support and signposting, as well as ensuring that the voice of victims and survivors is heard in the work of safeguarding in the Diocese.

# SAFEGUARDING IN PARISHES

The witness of the Church is lived out in parishes through the worship of God and through prayer. Central is the celebration of Mass, along with delivery of catechesis and sacramental preparation. Although Sunday is the principal day of worship, many Diocesan churches are open each day to celebrate Mass or just for a time of quiet prayer and reflection. The people who primarily support safeguarding in the daily life of parishes are the priests and deacons (clergy), parish safeguarding representatives and volunteers. Creating a safer culture in our churches is vital and requires everyone's efforts for it to be achieved and sustained. Through simple everyday actions we answer our call from God to protect and care for those around us who may be vulnerable due to age, illness, disability or current and past experiences in their lives and respond compassionately to help keep them safe from harm.

## Priests and Deacons

Parish Priests take the lead on setting the culture of safeguarding in their parish as part of their care of parishioners. They are supported in their role by deacons and by Parish Safeguarding representatives, and together they create a safe environment for all. Priests and deacons are diligent in carrying out their safeguarding responsibilities, demonstrating their commitment to developing their knowledge through ongoing engagement with safeguarding training and continual support of parish activities.

## Parish Safeguarding Representatives

The Diocese is incredibly fortunate to have a network of dedicated and vigilant Parish Safeguarding Representatives. The role of the Parish Safeguarding Representative (PSR) is to help promote a culture of safeguarding and help ensure safeguarding is understood as an essential part of the life and ministry of the Church. Working in partnership with the Parish Priest and Diocesan Safeguarding Office, Parish Safeguarding Reps are vital volunteer roles which raise awareness about safeguarding by ensuring policies and procedures are followed to create a safe environment for all children and adults who may be vulnerable. Parish Safeguarding Reps also play an important part in the safe recruitment practice of all volunteers in church ministry roles, (including carrying out DBS checks). Together with the Parish Priest, Reps are available to be consulted on safeguarding matters and are a point of contact for parishioners and volunteers who may wish to speak confidentially about any concerns they may have. Parish Safeguarding Reps are fully supported by the Diocesan Safeguarding Office and will receive a comprehensive induction after being appointed as well as regular training.

## Volunteers

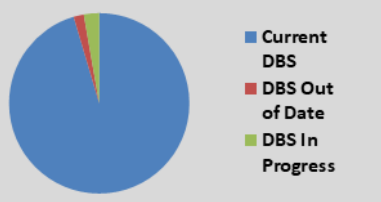
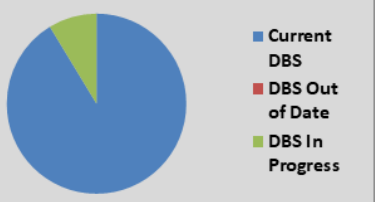
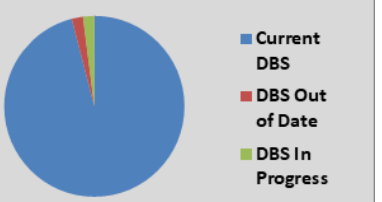
The work of the parishes in the celebration of Mass, the delivery of catechesis and sacramental preparation programmes is dependent on volunteers. More than 7,000 people volunteer within Diocesan parishes providing services as Extra-ordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, Lectors (Minsters of the Word), altar servers, catechists, cleaners, choir members & musicians, parish committee members, counters and collectors, and representatives for Gift Aid, and Health & Safety.

### DBS checks

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are carried out for those roles which bring people into contact with children or vulnerable adults, or both. There are strict criteria for carrying out DBS checks which the Diocese follows to ensure that this important safeguard is in place for all relevant roles. This practice helps the Church in its aim to ensure that anyone applying to undertake volunteer roles that give them direct access to children or adults who may be vulnerable, are selected with the utmost care.

During 2023, some 642 DBS checks were undertaken either for new volunteers or for those falling due for renewal after 3 years. 553 of these DBS checks were for Volunteer roles, 59 were processed for Paid Role DBS checks (which includes clergy) and 30 DBS Online Update Service rechecks were performed. At 31 December 2023 there were 5,758 volunteers registered with the Diocese in roles that require a DBS check. This is an increase of 267 during the year, as new volunteers have been recruited.

The Safeguarding Sub-Committee reviews key statistics on DBS checks at each of their meetings, which in turn are reported at Trustee meetings. The three key statistics monitored are those on DBS status of priests, deacons and parish safeguarding representatives as those responsible at parish level. At the end of 31 December 2023, the statistics were:

PRIESTS		DEACONS		PARISH SAFEGUARDING REPRESENTATIVES	
<b>Total *</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>
Current DBS	105	Current DBS	42	Current DBS	95
DBS Out of Date**	2	DBS Out of Date	0	DBS Out of Date	2
DBS In Progress	2	DBS In Progress	4	DBS In Progress	2
*available to celebrate Mass					
					

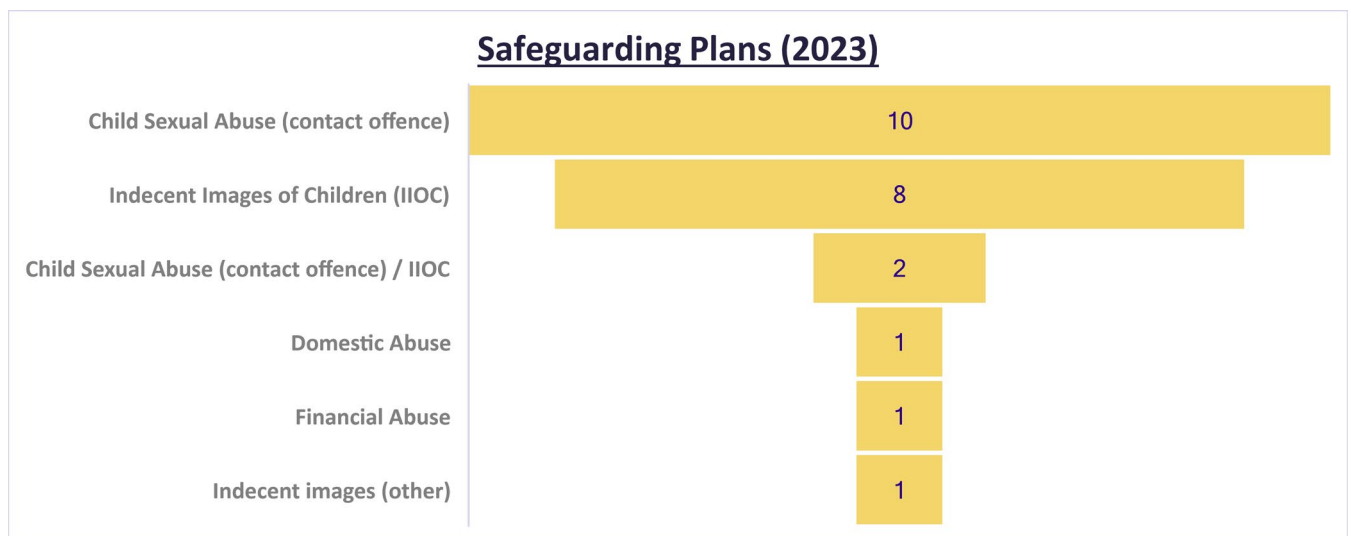
The explanations for out-of-date checks are considered by the Sub-Committee, which may be for reasons such as ill health preventing the individual concerned completing the recheck forms. Any delays other than for genuine reasons are escalated and action taken. The out-of-date checks referenced above have been completed since the year end.

# SAFEGUARDING PLANS

Safeguarding Plan agreements are initiated when information is made known to the Safeguarding Office regarding allegations, live statutory authority investigations, criminal convictions or where concerns remain pertaining to an individual engaging with parishes. These agreements enable effective safeguarding for all involved to facilitate safe worship and engagement, where appropriate, with parishes across the diocese.

Reconnecting those who have offended with their parish is part of the process of rehabilitation that reflects the Catholic social teaching principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. Safely managing this rehabilitation at the same time as caring for and protecting the parish community is achieved through putting in place safeguarding plans.

The nature of offending for the plans is varied and presents differing levels of risks. The underlying offences for those members of laity on safeguarding plans in 2023 can be seen below:



Safeguarding plans are also put in place for Diocesan clergy who are not in ministry following concerns being raised, statutory authority investigations taking place, criminal convictions or concerns remaining. At the end of the year there were three such plans in place.

### Open Safeguarding plans

At the end of the year there were eleven 11 Open Safeguarding Plans. The Plan subjects consisted of mostly lay Mass attenders with some Diocesan clergy, and laicised clergy external to the Diocese.

### Closed and suspended plans

Six Safeguarding Plans were closed during 2023. These Plans all consisted of lay subjects and were closed due to non-Mass attendance, subject moved out of UK, Sex Offender Registration & Probation Licence expiry, and HMP recall due to Probation Licence breach.

Three Safeguarding Plans remain Suspended on file pending potential further safeguarding actions. Contact remained in place with these 3 subjects.

### Review of plans

Plans are reviewed periodically with the subject and include support from Police or Probation as appropriate. This ensures that the safety of all is maintained at the same time as supporting rehabilitation of offenders.

### Religious Life plans

There were five plans which the Diocese has been maintaining pending the transfer to the Religious Life Safeguarding Service. Four of these relate to the circumstances lay subject's worship, one related to conduct of a member of a Religious Life Group.

***“To think that the inner order of a person may be corrected only through punishment, this is not God’s way, this is mistaken....the most important thing is what God does with us. He takes us by the hand and He helps us to go on. And this is called hope!”***

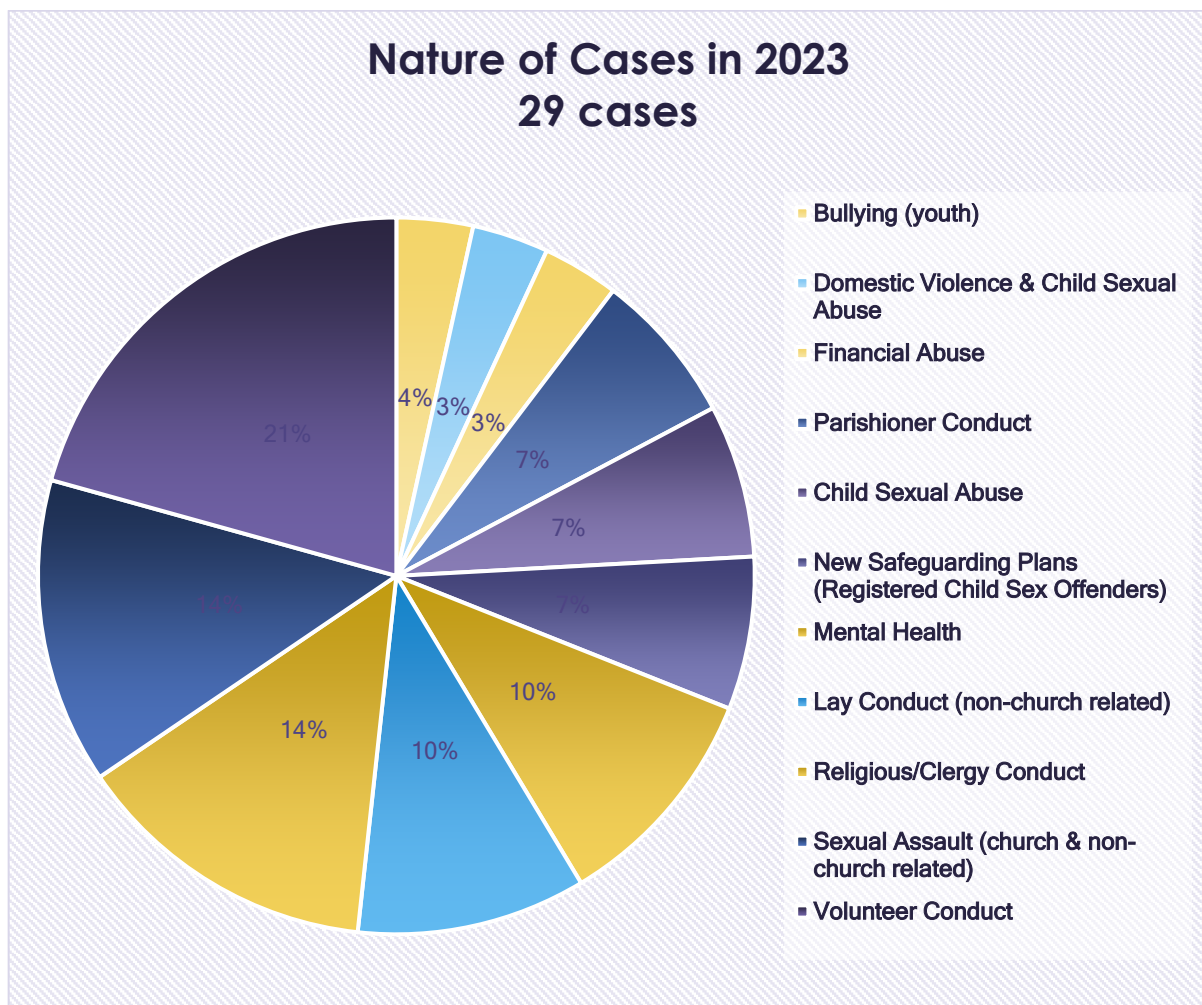
***Pope Francis .***



# SAFEGUARDING CASEWORK

The Safeguarding Office provides advice and support to priests, deacons, parishioners, volunteers, Diocesan staff, and members of the public engaging with the Diocesan Catholic community. The advice and support can be on concerns raised about current incidents happening in parishes, historic incidents, as well as signposting those who are suffering at present due to matters happening outside of the Church in their own families or relationships.

This casework is recorded for ongoing management and support of those in contact with the Safeguarding Office. Where appropriate and in line with the national safeguarding policies and procedures of the Catholic Church in England & Wales, referrals and consultations are held with relevant statutory authorities. The Safeguarding Office will also signpost those affected to appropriate resources such as Safe Spaces, or other organisations appropriate to the individuals' circumstances.



# TRAINING

The Safeguarding Office facilitates safeguarding training to ensure that all those with responsibilities for safeguarding including clergy, volunteers, new discerners, parishioners, and incoming clergy from overseas, have appropriate skills and tools .

The Diocese has a three-year plan for training and during 2022 intensive training for clergy had been provided ensuring that as we began 2023 clergy are up to date in their skills and knowledge. There was 100% attendance by all clergy at the three modules of training by the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA):

- Module 1- Leadership Canon & Civil Law in Safeguarding (June)
- Module 2- Victims & Survivors (July)
- Module 3- Creating Safer Environments (August)

Further modules are planned for 2024, again delivered by the CSSA.

## Training delivered by the Safeguarding Office

During 2023 there were a number of training initiatives undertaken, as well as inductions:

- 11 training sessions delivered to Parish Safeguarding Representatives.
- 4 safeguarding refresher training sessions (safeguarding awareness, safer recruitment).
- St Vincent de Paul specific DBS processing training for 3 key nominated SVP volunteers across the diocese.

## Joint Safeguarding and Health & Safety Training Sessions

As an initiative to promote engagement by volunteers in training, the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator and Health & Safety Officer delivered sessions across the diocese advertised to clergy, staff, volunteers, and parishioners. The safeguarding specific element of the training sessions covered

- Understanding your role & responsibilities in safeguarding.
- Protecting the vulnerable & protecting yourself.
- Knowing where to go for support and advice.
- Helping develop a culture of safeguarding.
- Accessing free training.

## Lourdes Pilgrimage

Collaborative work between the Diocesan Trustee Safeguarding Sub-Committee and the Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage Management Team saw the below mandated training for all volunteers and clergy attending the 2023 pilgrimage. Alongside this safeguarding e-learning, there were two face-to-face sessions provided.

# VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS COMMITMENT

During 2023, the Diocese developed its Victim and Survivor Commitment, which was published on its website in January 2024. Safeguarding Office was incredibly grateful for the engagement and support of a small group of victims and survivors who kindly assisted the Safeguarding Office with the review process and formulation of a meaningful document showing the commitment of the diocese in supporting those who seek help and have reported abuse.

The commitment document clearly details what victims and survivors can expect when they contact the diocese, what support can be facilitated and how they will be respected and supported in their wishes to maintain ownership of their reports. A main aim of the commitment document is the hope of instilling confidence in people and encouraging them to speak out with confidence.

The Commitment from Bishop Mark Davies is reproduced here:

“The Diocese of Shrewsbury is committed to treating everyone with respect and dignity. As a diocese we are committed to moving forward and building a foundation and relationships based upon faith and in trust with all victims and survivors. As Bishop, I fully understand that the creation of a safe culture begins with the respectful, compassionate and non-judgemental response to people who have been affected by abuse in the Church regardless of where the harm occurred or who is responsible. We will meet victims and survivors where they are in their own journey, we will act justly, behave with integrity, and walk with them using the best supportive practices. We remain humbled by the courage of those who speak about their experience to us, privileged that we have been given an opportunity to give a voice to the voiceless, to listen and learn, to support their all-important healing and, through their courage, to make the Church a safer place for everyone. When a victim or survivor contacts the Safeguarding Office to share their information, they can choose how they want to communicate their experience with our highly experienced Safeguarding Coordinator, either in person at a venue comfortable to them, speaking on the telephone or in writing either electronically or by traditional means. No matter which communication method is chosen, it will be kept confidential, responded to in a timely way and taken at a pace which is comfortable for the person sharing their story. It is the policy of the Diocese of Shrewsbury to refer all disclosures of abuse to statutory authorities (Police & Social Services) in line with the national Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency guidance whether the abuse is current or non-recent. We do this

to protect children, young people, and adults from harm, as perpetrators may still be alive and potentially working with vulnerable groups. Any referrals to statutory authorities are made in discussion with the person who is reporting an experience, and they will always have the choice of whether they consent to their details being included in referrals. Support will be provided through the process and if information is required to be shared, the person reporting will be informed of what will be shared and with whom. Support will always be offered when requested by the victim or survivor if they want to be accompanied by someone during conversations or meetings. We acknowledge that deciding what, when, and how to speak out about abuse is a deeply personal matter and the diocese will ensure that all concerns are listened to and taken seriously. Those seeking support will always be kept informed so that they can retain as much control as possible and feel empowered to make their decisions in their own best interests. Anyone contacting the diocese to report concerns or allegations will be offered support. This will be centred around the person's individual needs and could include such things as pastoral support, spiritual support, or therapeutic support. The diocese has and will meet its obligations under General Data Protection Regulations relating to information and its responsibilities to share information with statutory agencies, but we will never forget that there is a person at the heart of this process. In 2023, the Diocese published its *As Bishop, I fully understand* that the creation of a safe culture begins with the respectful, compassionate and non-judgemental response to people who have been affected by abuse in the Church regardless of where the harm occurred or who is responsible. We will meet victims and survivors where they are in their own journey, we will act justly, behave with integrity, and walk with them using the best supportive practices.”

## **Commitment to delivery of effective safeguarding**

Diocesan aims to deliver effective safeguarding by

- Ensuring safeguarding is central to the Church's mission and everyone recognises that they have a safeguarding responsibility.
- Provision of appropriate and ongoing training and support for volunteers and clergy, whilst ensuring all volunteers, clergy and staff are appropriately recruited in line with safer recruitment practices.
- Collaborative working with statutory authorities, faith organisations, charities, and individuals to provide effective support for those seeking it.
- On an individual case by case basis the diocese will consider funding for independent counselling where appropriate.

- To identify emerging themes and areas for best practice development, cases and support work will be reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding Sub-Committee and Trustees on an anonymised basis for review.
- The Diocese will be transparent in its safeguarding communications by ensuring safeguarding literature such as contact posters and Parish Safeguarding Representative information is readily available by a variety of methods (posters, website information, leaflets). The diocese has a dedicated section on the central website to seek safeguarding information.
- Safeguarding will be promoted across the diocese by engaging with the Day of Prayer for Victims & Survivors of Abuse and Safeguarding Sunday. This provides further opportunities for a focus on safeguarding.
- The Diocese of Shrewsbury respects the rights of all individuals when collecting, processing, and storing personal data. You can read our full privacy notice at <https://www.dioceseofshrewsbury.org/legal/privacy-notice/>.

## Engagement

The Elliott Review of 2020 stated that “To provide an effective safeguarding service, it is imperative that the voice of those that have been harmed through their involvement with the Church, is heard and learnt from.” These words have led the Diocese to carefully engage with those who have been harmed through their contact with the Church, as they have much to teach us in how we can support victims and survivors. In turn the Diocese can offer support to those who have been harmed either directly or through engaging with other groups such as Safe Spaces. Alongside the work on the Victim and Survivor Commitment, we continue to engage with those who have been harmed to inform practice and development of a culture of safeguarding.

## Day of Prayers for Victims and Survivors of Abuse

This day of prayer for all victims and survivors of abuse across society is marked each year in Shrewsbury Diocese. The liturgical resources provided by the Catholic Bishop’s Conference England & Wales working group ‘The Isaiah Journey’ are annually reviewed by the Diocesan Episcopal Vicar for Worship and the Safeguarding Coordinator and then shared with all priests, deacons, and parish safeguarding representatives for parish use. The annual day of prayer not only invites everyone to pray for those affected but to listen to the voices of victims and survivors and learn how the Church can better respond to them.

## LOUDfence (2023)

In November 2023 a LOUDfence event was held at Vicar General Canon Philip Moor's parish of Holy Apostles & Martyrs with the support of Antonia Sobocki (LOUDfence UK Director). LOUDfence is a community activity of solidarity and support with abuse victims and survivors. It empowers parishioners and enables them to be part of the solution by giving them an avenue to express their feelings. To safeguard is to live out the values of the Gospel in their most literal sense. It is an event where ribbons of all colours and styles are displayed as a visible act of solidarity which enables people to send and receive messages of care and support. The aim of LOUDfence is to give survivors, the entire church and wider society a voice.

The encouragement and contributions in the way of prayers and reflections to support the event from parishes across the diocese was incredibly positive and demonstrated a real culture of care and understanding.



# LOOKING FORWARD

The work of safeguarding is ongoing, as we look for continuous improvement in all that we do.

During 2024, the Diocese will have a baseline audit by the CSSA which will benchmark its safeguarding provision against the national maturity matrix. This is the first time that the Diocese has been through such a process, the outcome of which will be published on its website.

Work will continue to engage with victims and survivors both to provide support and assistance as needed and to learn from them.

Training will be rolled out for Parish Safeguarding Representatives to fall in line with DBS renewal, and will include a focus on Safer Recruitment, Creating Safer Environments, and Engagement with the CSSA Learning Management System (LMS).

Staff safeguarding training will be extended to all staff members in the Curial Office, parishes, and subsidiary companies including licensed social club. This will be the LMS level 1 training and will be the biggest roll out of safeguarding training that we have undertaken to date. Staff who require more in-depth training will be required to undertake the relevant LMS models by the end of the year.

## Conclusion

Creating and maintaining a culture of safeguarding in our Diocese and Parishes requires a collective effort from all people of good will supported by strong leadership, appropriate expertise, openness and transparency. Adherence to the standards, policies and guidance of the CSSA has ensured that those who report having been harmed and those against whom allegations are made receive a service which operates to the highest standards.

The work detailed in this report represents the largest ever investment of time, energy and resources in safeguarding by our Bishop, clergy, staff, the 99 Parish Safeguarding Representatives and more than 7,000 volunteers, and whilst the Safeguarding Sub-Committee owes each of them a debt of gratitude, we are not complacent.

We will continue to listen and learn from those with lived experience of abuse in all its harmful forms whether it has a connection to the Church or not, so that we create spaces where everyone has the freedom to grow and develop their relationship with God and feel safe in the practice of their faith.



Karyn Johnston

Trustee and Chair of the Safeguarding Sub-Committee

# KEY CONTACTS

## The Safeguarding Office

Tel. 0151 652 9855

[Safeguarding@dioceseofshrewsbury.org](mailto:Safeguarding@dioceseofshrewsbury.org)

Curial Office, 2 Park Road South, Prenton, Wirral CH43 4UX

## Safeguarding Coordinator

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Mob. 07557731492

[Andrew.obrien@dioceseofshrewsbury.org](mailto:Andrew.obrien@dioceseofshrewsbury.org)

## Diocesan Trustee Safeguarding Sub-Committee Chair

Mrs Karyn Johnston

[karyn.johnston@dioceseofshrewsbury.org](mailto:karyn.johnston@dioceseofshrewsbury.org)

**Safe Spaces** is a free and independent support service, providing a confidential, personal, and safe space for anyone who has been abused by someone in the Church or as a result of their relationship with the Church of England, the Catholic Church of England and Wales or the Church in Wales. Safe Spaces are available on 0300 303 1056 (Mon-Fri 9am-9pm, Sat 9am-1pm. Excluding bank holidays).

<https://www.safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk/>

## Reporting abuse

If you are concerned about the welfare of a child or adult at risk, do not delay in contacting the police, using 999 if a child or adult is believed to be in immediate danger.

It is the policy of the Catholic Church in England and Wales to report all allegations of abuse to statutory authorities, regardless of whether the abuse occurred recently or in the past, or whether the accused person is living or deceased. If you are in any role within the Catholic Church in England and Wales, you must refer allegations directly to the safeguarding office for your diocese or religious congregation, or directly to the Police. If you are a member of the public, please refer allegations directly to the police and also to the safeguarding office in your diocese; (the relevant Diocesan safeguarding office can be located here <http://www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/locate-diocese/>).

You can also contact Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) by telephoning 0207 901 1920 or via email at [admin@catholicsafeguarding.org.uk](mailto:admin@catholicsafeguarding.org.uk)

<https://www.dioceseofshrewsbury.org/safeguarding/>