

NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING PANEL

CHURCH OF ENGLAND NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING PANEL

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Introduction

This report covers the work of the National Safeguarding Panel during the calendar year 2023. It was a challenging year with the need to adapt to the sudden resignation in July of the Panel's former chair and the disbandment of the Independent Safeguarding Board. These significant events created uncertainties which necessitated an immediate re-setting of the Panel's governance and consolidation of their approach to scrutiny work.

Transition arrangements were put in place under the leadership of an interim chair, Kashmir Garton and vice chair, Jane Chevous. They led their first meeting in November. Whilst the church awaits the publication of Professor Alexis Jay's review into the future of safeguarding arrangements and considers the implications of the Sarah Wilkinson (KC) review into the disbandment of the Independent Safeguarding Board, the future of the Panel remains uncertain. However, the interim chair was focused on continuing the programme of scrutiny until new arrangements were in place. This was essential in the absence of alternative scrutiny arrangements.

Background

The National Safeguarding Panel was established in 2018 under an independent chair. The Panel comprises independent members including safeguarding professionals and survivor representatives. A parish clergy representative, offering a local perspective, has been included in the membership. Church representatives attend meetings: the lead and deputy lead bishops on safeguarding, representatives of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York as well as the National Director of Safeguarding. The Catholic and Methodist churches are also represented on the Panel. The Panel is led by an Independent Chair and supported by a contracted Independent Associate, both part time remunerated roles.

Over the years, the Panel has undertaken a broad range of safeguarding activities including:

- Scrutiny of at least 5 safeguarding policy areas or themes a year.
- Delivery of a strength based good practice webinar.
- Reporting to the National Safeguarding Steering Group.
- Receiving and scrutinising National Safeguarding Team overview reports.
- Contributing to safeguarding policy consultations.

There are two areas that the Panel is not involved with: it does not have a role in relation to the scrutiny of individual cases and it does not carry out quality assurance. These functions are expected to be included in future independent arrangements for safeguarding and the National Safeguarding Team is in the process of implementing a Quality Assurance Framework for safeguarding in all parts of the church. Safeguarding audits have also commenced in line with the recommendations of the Independent Inquiry into Church Sexual Abuse (IICSA).

The future role and function of the Panel will be contingent on Professor Alexis Jay's review and the lessons learnt from Sarah Wilkinson (KC) review. Both these reviews are covered later in this annual report.

The current terms of reference for the Panel are available at Appendix A.

NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING PANEL**Panel Meetings**

The programme of meetings has continued throughout 2023. The format normally consists of relevant people leading on the topic being scrutinised (usually policy leads from the National Safeguarding Team) providing an update ahead of the meeting and then attending to answer questions that the Panel have on the topic. The Panel then formulate their recommendations, and these are shared with the National Safeguarding Steering Group, which has oversight of national safeguarding within the church. In addition, the Panel receives updates on the work of the National Safeguarding Team and other safeguarding developments in the church.

The previous chair would communicate an overview of each session and recommendations on her blog. Arrangements are currently being considered to re-establish a similar blog process as the Panel recognises the importance of delivering an open and transparent approach to scrutiny and its work.

The first Panel meeting of 2023 (January) was a Panel development session where the Panel considered the impacts and outcomes of its work on the safeguarding policies, practices, and behaviours in the church. To assist with developing this insight the Panel undertook a focused '360 feedback' process using questionnaires to garner the views and experiences of those who had previously attended the Panel and the views of those within the church directly involved in the Panel's work. The key consultees included:

- Lead and former lead safeguarding bishops and those attending from the church.
- Members of the National Safeguarding Team including those that had attended a Panel session.
- Previous scrutiny participants.

The feedback enabled the Panel to identify areas of strength as well as areas for development to be taken forward such as the following:

Strengths

- Most people attending the scrutiny Panel found the sessions useful in terms of developing approaches to safeguarding work.
- Significant value was placed on the work of the Panel as a space for reflection, acting as a critical friend and offering scrutiny as well as practice accountability.

Areas for Development

- Improving awareness of the Panel's work more widely.
- Improving the way impacts and outcomes are monitored in terms of policy, practice, and behaviours.

This session enabled the Panel to build several enhancements to the way it functions and crucially, it identified that the relationships between the Panel, National Safeguarding Steering Group and the Independent Safeguarding Board should be clarified so that there was a shared and collective understanding of these groups' respective roles within the church's safeguarding framework. The Panel session in May was designed to begin to address some of these issues with the Independent Safeguarding Board and others. Unfortunately, the May session was cancelled at short notice.

The development session also included a group exercise where members discussed the scrutiny subjects to prioritise for the year.

NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING PANEL**Subjects examined for Scrutiny sessions.**

The Panel seeks to examine issues at a time when it can influence the thinking of the Church and therefore have the biggest impact. Therefore, it's not always possible to align the Panel's prioritised scrutiny topics with the timelines of safeguarding projects or NST work. Accordingly, some topics are brought forward in the scrutiny programme or deferred to a more appropriate time when the Panel's scrutiny can add the most value.

During 2023, it was only possible to hold 2 bespoke scrutiny sessions in March and July. The May meeting was cancelled. In March the focus was on survivor engagement and in July the theme was on the progress with the Past Cases Review 2 (PCR2) national recommendations. Following the July meeting, the former chair stood down. The September meeting focussed on deciding the future of the Panel and caretaker leadership arrangements which were required to continue its operation. Such arrangements were necessary as the Panel did not have a vice chair role in place to continue the work.

Following a member led appointment process for the chair and an agreement to establish a vice chair role, the November meeting was the first opportunity for the interim incumbents to consolidate the transitional arrangements and plan for future scrutiny activity in 2024.

These changes to the operation of the Panel meant that the delivery of the Panel's annual good practice webinar, which had been so positively received in the two preceding years, was not implemented.

March Scrutiny session: Survivor Engagement

The Panel were joined for this session by policy leads from the National Safeguarding Team and 2 diocesan safeguarding advisers from different dioceses. The Panel acknowledged the growth of survivor participation and engagement in safeguarding activity over recent years in the additional investment and resources committed to this area of work by the church. There were many examples of good practice being delivered at a national and diocesan level supported by the National Safeguarding Team. However, the Panel noted that concerns remained in many areas of safeguarding practice from those who had experienced church-based abuse and there was a need for greater clarity on the overarching strategy and plans for survivor engagement. The recommendations developed by the Panel sought to address these challenges.

It was also agreed that the Panel could play a useful role in helping to facilitate a session between professionals and survivors to explore the barriers which can present in the relationships between staff members, survivors, survivor groups and their advocates. A working group of Panel members was established to progress and support this initiative.

July Scrutiny session: Implementing the national Past Cases Review 2 (PCR2) recommendations.

The Panel were joined for this session by the National Safeguarding Team lead director for the project, a project officer as well as a Diocesan Safeguarding Panel (DSAP) chair and a Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor.

This session enabled the Panel to scrutinise the progress made on recommendations published in the national PCR2 summary report (October 2022) and to revisit recommendations from the Panel's previous scrutiny sessions of PCR2 in October 2020 and December 2021. The Panel acknowledged the scale of the review and the progress made in many areas. Many improvements were reflected in the experiences of diocesan safeguarding representatives attending the session, particularly the improved service offer to survivors.

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The Panel made several recommendations to ensure future progress and to address some outstanding issues including sharing updates on the progress with recommendations and identifying learning for what had worked well. The Panel also recognised that consistency of safeguarding practice remained a challenge in the operation and practice of Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panels.

The investment within the National Safeguarding Team of a Benefits Realisation post to identify the impacts and outcomes from safeguarding activity was welcomed.

Policy Consultation

In addition to the scrutiny meetings, Panel members also took part in an online consultation with National Safeguarding Team policy and project leads on the development of the Safeguarding Standards and Quality Assurance Framework. This was an ideal opportunity for members to offer an independent view and provide a valuable contribution to the development of the frameworks. The Standards and Quality Assurance Framework were viewed favourably by the members that contributed to this consultation.

Contribution to other reviews**Wilkinson Review**

Sarah Wilkinson (KC), of Blackstone Chambers in London, was asked to carry out an independent review following the decision by the Archbishops Council to terminate the contracts of the members of the Independent Safeguarding Board leading to the disbandment of the Board following a breakdown in relationships. The Panel did not have any involvement in this review although their meeting minutes were provided to the review. The full report can be found here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/isb-review-report-30-november-2023.pdf>

The Panel recognised at its September meeting that significant issues had arisen from disbanding the Independent Safeguarding Board and that the related General Synod discussion on the issue on the 9 July had caused widespread concerns.

Members of the Panel felt that the impact of this development was far reaching for victims and survivors and the church. The Panel approached the Secretary General of the Archbishops Council highlighting their concerns and requested a discussion with the Archbishops Council to constructively understand:

- How the impacts on safeguarding were being managed.
- What lessons had been learnt from the process.
- How the legacy work of the Independent Safeguarding Board, including implementing the recommendations in their report, "Don't Panic- Be Pastoral" will be taken forward.

These points will be taken forward at a future meeting with members of the Archbishop's Council.

Professor Alexis Jay Review

In July, Professor Alexis Jay agreed to develop proposals for a fully independent structure for safeguarding scrutiny in the church. The terms of reference for the work were set as follows:

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- To provide options and recommendations for forming an independent safeguarding scrutiny body for the Church of England.
- To make any recommendations for how further independence of safeguarding might be achieved.
- To make any other recommendations that are necessary or appropriate.

They were asked to consult widely with stakeholders both inside and outside the church.

Despite attempts by the Panel to directly engage and contribute to the review process, no meetings were held with the Panel by the review team. Whilst some individual members did have 1-1 consultation sessions, the Panel collectively were disappointed not to be seen as a key stakeholder within this review process. Indeed, the Panel has been the only governance body providing independent safeguarding oversight and scrutiny in the church and has done so since being established in 2018 under an independent chair.

In the absence of any direct engagement with the review team, the Panel submitted a written submission setting out their reflections and opportunities to build stronger independent oversight. This was acknowledged; however, no further response has been received.

A copy of the Panels submission can be found at Appendix B.

Future Plans

Options for scrutiny topics for the first quarter of 2024 have been identified and include the Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse Policy, and the development and delivery of the safeguarding audit framework for dioceses and cathedrals. Understanding the church response and the implications of both the Wilkinson and Jay reviews were also seen as a high priority for the Panel.

The Panel meetings are held in person, with one scheduled online meeting to be delivered as a Panel development session. Outside of the meetings the Panel will continue to develop its approach to the implementation of its recommendations and the impacts and outcomes it contributes to. The Panel's terms of reference will also be reviewed and updated.

The interim chair and vice chair roles end in April 2024 and the Panel has begun work to clarify the church's position on the future direction of the Panel including the appointment of a permanent chair and to consider the longer-term arrangements for a vice chair.

Membership of the Panel in 2023

During 2023 independent new members joined the Panel: Peter Willson a survivor representative, Sally Hodges with expertise in children's safeguarding, the Panel also welcomed Joanne Grenfell as the new lead bishop following the end of Bishop Jonathan Gibbs' tenure.

We said farewell to Kevin Ball the independent expert member in children safeguarding, Phil Johnson a survivor representative and Amanda Edwards former deputy chief executive at Social Care Institute for Excellence. All three had come to the end of their tenure.

We are grateful to all our current and former independent members of the Panel for their commitment, experience, and insights that they bring to the important work of the Panel.

The current membership of the Panel can be found at Appendix C.

Signed

K Garton- Interim Chair

J Chevous- Interim Vice Chair

Appendix A – NSP Terms of Reference

Appendix B – NSP submission to the Jay review

Appendix C – NSP Membership

Appendix A

National Safeguarding Panel Terms of reference.

The National Safeguarding Panel is an independent panel led by the Independent Chair. Its Terms of Reference and composition are determined by the Archbishops' Council.

It will:

1. Provide high level strategic advice and offer guidance on policies and practice in safeguarding seeking to ensure that the Church of England meets accepted best practice.
2. Provide scrutiny and challenge to the church for its work on safeguarding including examining existing and proposed policies in depth and the regular analysis of the data compiled in the areas of
 - Prevention through promotion of safeguarding,
 - Responding to current concerns or disclosures,
 - Responding to non-current concerns or disclosures,
 - Support for survivors.

The panel will determine a work programme. Outside of meetings the Chair will consult with three representatives of the panel regarding items for the agenda. These to include one survivor representative, one person from the Church of England, and one representative of the expert members.

The panel will consider and comment on the National Safeguarding Team's annual work plan and make recommendations for priorities. It will consider papers on matters prepared by the National Safeguarding Team. It will undertake in-depth consideration of key areas of concern and proposed developments and ensure appropriate input to the National Safeguarding Steering Group. The Director of Safeguarding will ensure that the Chair is kept informed of its work.

The panel can ask for Church personnel to attend to speak to papers and to answer questions. The panel will ensure complementarity with the church's work with survivors. However, the panel does not have a role in relation to individual cases. Specific approaches or enquiries will be referred to the Director of Safeguarding.

The Chair will provide regular reports on its work and present an annual report presented to the National Safeguarding Steering Group. The role of Independent Chair in addition to chairing the panel, the Chair will work closely with the Director of Safeguarding in preparation of agendas and to ensure the effective functioning of the panel. The Chair will maintain oversight of key business, attending other meetings as and when required and will meet panel members outside the meeting as required.

Composition of the panel

- Independent Chair - externally recruited with 3-year term renewable for a further maximum of 2 years.
- 2 representative members one from each of the Catholic and Methodist churches.
- 3 survivors of church abuse from organisations that support survivors **Five independent expert members.**
- 2 members with expertise in children's safeguarding.

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- 2 members with expertise in adult safeguarding.
- 1 member with expertise in working with offenders.

The following Church representatives will be “in attendance” at the Panel’s meetings: lead and deputy lead bishops on safeguarding; representatives of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York; and the Director of Safeguarding.

Appendix B- NSP submission to the Jay review.

Kashmir Garton
Interim Chair
National Safeguarding Panel
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Professor Alexis Jay
Future of Church Safeguarding

Dear Professor Jay

Re Consultation on future church safeguarding and independent safeguarding structures

I write following email exchanges with your office concerning the opportunities for the National Safeguarding Panel (NSP) to contribute to your consultation process. It is disappointing that the NSP members have not collectively been able to meet with you in person to offer their experiences and insights into the crucial issues of safeguarding governance in the church. However, we are keen to contribute to your review, as any independent oversight of safeguarding activity in the church is at the heart of our own practice as a Panel.

The last email from your team suggested the NSP makes a submission via your online survey. On review this did not seem to be able to accommodate a group submission. We are therefore using this correspondence to offer what we hope will be constructive observations about the work of the NSP to inform your review.

The National Safeguarding Panel**Role and purpose**

The NSP is a multi-agency, multi-denominational panel with survivor representation and has become a key part of the governance and scrutiny of safeguarding practice in the Church of England.

The NSP was established to provide independent scrutiny drawing on a range of external voices not employed by the Church of England. Its terms of reference reflect the provision of strategic advice and guidance on policies and practice, seeking to ensure that the church meets accepted best practice. Additionally, the NSP provides scrutiny and challenge to the church for its work on safeguarding, drawing on the professional skills and experience of the members. The NSP does not have a role with individual cases nor case management.

Membership

Since 2018 the NSP has been chaired by an independent professional. The membership includes survivors as well as a range of independent members with specialist safeguarding experience drawn from other denominations, members with expertise in child and adult safeguarding and in working with offenders.

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Church representatives do attend meetings including the lead and deputy lead bishops for safeguarding and the respective Archbishop representatives. Survivor representatives have included members of longstanding survivor groups, bringing institutional memory and wider perspectives than just individual cases. None of the independent members are fettered by any allegiance to church bodies and are truly independent of 'mind and action'. Only the chair and the NSP Associate (an independently contracted safeguarding consultant) are remunerated for their work.

Independence

We are keen as a group to ensure that future arrangements take cognisance of the value of independent expertise, and how the experiences from a range of sectors and perspectives and survivor experiences can enhance preventative work and safeguarding responses at all levels in the church. Providing independent scrutiny and challenge is key to helping the church deliver improvements with their safeguarding work and should be central to any future oversight arrangements.

There are significant benefits which arise from harnessing safeguarding expertise from outside the church and using this in a collaborative way to apply scrutiny and more broadly offer feedback on policy to enhance the development of the safeguarding framework in all church settings. Indeed, such breadth of sector perspectives and insights is one of the strengths of statutory multi-agency safeguarding arrangements within local authority areas.

Proposals/Future changes

In any consideration for establishing total independence from the church and potentially separating functions of practice delivery and inspection into different organisations, there needs to be careful reflection on the balance of governance, accountability, and scrutiny. Some of the key questions which we feel are worthy of consideration include:

- How will the contractual arrangements for different bodies be managed and how will accountability be applied with those organisations holding safeguarding contracts?
- Who will scrutinise the operational contracts under such arrangements in respect of safeguarding culture, practice, behaviours, policies, prioritisation, training and the impacts and outcomes of safeguarding work in the church? The scrutiny process should be an integral element of independence to achieve service improvements. Building in feedback from individual survivor cases and survivor groups would further enhance the quality of scrutiny work.
- Defining the scope and extent of church accountability within the new structure is important. A potential unintended consequence of having complete independence is that the interfaces of accountability and responsibility become vague with the potential to shift accountability onto other bodies operating in the church safeguarding space. Complex governance overlaid onto the complex structures that exist in the church, whilst not a reason to avoid change, do require deep reflection and understanding of the practical consequences. The Panel would like to understand any consultation or evaluation frameworks that will support the implementation of your final recommendations.
- We are also keen to ensure that survivor representation and survivor groups remain core to the new arrangements and would like to establish how this will feature in the future arrangements.

It is acknowledged that the NSP is not entirely independent from the church, as its administrative support, collaboration with the National Safeguarding Team and close working with the National Safeguarding Steering Group are all hallmarks of the current operation. Nevertheless, the independent members all offer a wealth of experience and insight from across the safeguarding sector which adds value to church safeguarding policy and practice.

We feel there is an opportunity to learn from the experience of the Panel's operation and build on the current construct of the NSP to help deliver the shared ambition of making the church a safer place for all. Please let me know if you require any additional information.

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Yours sincerely
 Kashmir Garton - Interim Chair
 On behalf of the Church of England, National Safeguarding Panel
Appendix C- NSP membership (December 2023)

Panel Members:

INTERIM CHAIR			
Name	Appointed	End of First Term	End of Second Term
Kashmir Garton	November 2023	May 2024	
SURVIVOR REPRESENTATIVES			
Jane Chevous	February 2021	February 2024	February 2026
Maxi Leigh	June 2021	May 2024	May 2026
Peter Willson	May 2023	April 2026	April 2028
EXPERT MEMBERS			
David Cooper (adults)	November 2019	October 2022	October 2024
Children s expert- Vacancy as at November 2023			
Kashmir Garton (offenders)	September 2021	August 2024	August 2026
Lindsey Bampton (adults)	November 2021	October 2024	October 2026
Sally Hodges (children)	May 2023	April 2026	April 2028
Judith Davey Cole (Methodist Church)	No terms of office		
Amanda Ellingworth (Catholic Church)	No terms of office		
MEMBER OF CLERGY CURRENTLY ACTIVE IN A PARISH			
Lynda Davies	May 2022	April 2025	April 2027

In attendance:

Lead Bishop for Safeguarding (Joanne Grenfell, Bishop of Stepney)
 Deputy Lead Bishops for Safeguarding (Julie Conalty and Vivienne Faull)
 Bishop at Lambeth, representative of Archbishop of Canterbury (Margaret Cave, Episcopal Secretary to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York)
 Deputy Chief of Staff to the Archbishop of York (Andrew Brown)