

SAFEGUARDING

Learning from our Parish Audits - August 2026

Over the past three years, the Safeguarding Office has completed a Parish Safeguarding Audit in every Parish in the Diocese. We would like to thank every Parish Safeguarding Representative, member of the Clergy and Volunteer who welcomed us and supported the audit process.

The purpose of the audits has always been to support Parishes, celebrate good practice and identify opportunities to strengthen local Safeguarding arrangements.

This summary highlights the key themes identified throughout the audit programme, together with examples of good practice that we hope will benefit all Parishes.

OVERVIEW

Over the last three years we have:

- Completed a full cycle of Parish Safeguarding Audits across the Diocese.
- Visited every Parish and met with Parish Safeguarding Representatives.
- Celebrated and shared examples of good Safeguarding practice.
- Supported Parishes to strengthen local Safeguarding arrangements.
- Introduced the Parish Compliance Table to monitor DBS and training compliance.
- Seen significant improvements in Safeguarding compliance across the Diocese.
- Built strong working relationships with Parish Safeguarding Representatives, strengthening our partnership and supporting a consistent approach to Safeguarding across the Diocese.

AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE

Throughout the audit cycle, we saw many examples of excellent Safeguarding practice, including:

- Safe recruitment processes being followed consistently.
- Parish Safeguarding Representatives who were well organised and fully engaged with their Safeguarding responsibilities.
- Strong record keeping for Volunteers and Safeguarding documentation.
- A positive commitment from Clergy and Parish leadership to maintaining safe environments.

COMMON THEMES IDENTIFIED

A number of recurring themes were identified, including:

- On occasions Risk Assessments were sometimes missing or incomplete.
- On occasions Codes of Conduct were sometimes missing or incomplete.
- On occasions Parish Safeguarding Registers lacked important information, particularly in relation to Children's Liturgy groups.
- Volunteer training uptake was low in several Parishes.

IMPROVEMENTS DURING THE AUDIT CYCLE

One of the most encouraging outcomes of the audit programme has been seeing Parishes implement recommendations following their audit. Many Parishes updated their Safeguarding Registers, improved record keeping, introduced missing Risk Assessments and Codes of Conduct, and strengthened local Safeguarding procedures shortly after receiving their audit report/action plan.

The Safeguarding Office uses a Parish Compliance Table, which monitors DBS and training compliance across Parishes using a Red, Amber and Green system.

To achieve Green, Parishes must be at least 95% compliant with DBS and Safeguarding Training requirements. Parishes falling below 94% are Amber, while those below 75% are Red.

When the audit programme began in 2023:

- 55% of Parishes were Red for DBS compliance.
- 80% Parishes were Red for Safeguarding Training compliance.

As of August 2026:

- 95% of Parishes are Green for DBS compliance.
- 95% Parishes are Green for Safeguarding Training compliance.



LOOKING AHEAD

As we begin the next stage of the audit programme, our focus will be on continuing to support Parishes through:

- Continuing to send Parish Safeguarding Representatives a bi-monthly report showing DBS and training compliance within their Parish.
- Regular compliance reviews by the Safeguarding Team, with support visits where compliance levels indicate additional assistance would be beneficial.
- Visits on request from any Parish seeking safeguarding advice or support.
- Continued sharing of good practice across the Diocese, including example Risk Assessments and other Safeguarding resources that can be adopted and adapted for local use.
- Support during periods of transition, including the appointment of a new Parish Priest and/or Parish Safeguarding Representative.
- Annual Parish Self-Audits each September.
- Ongoing advice, guidance and support from the Safeguarding Office.

The Safeguarding Office is grateful for the opportunity to have worked alongside every Parish Safeguarding Representative throughout the audit programme. Building strong working relationships across the Diocese has been one of the most valuable outcomes of the process, and we look forward to continuing to support Parishes in the years ahead.

Please see below some **testimonies** from members of our Parishes who engaged in this process with us:

'It was lovely to meet you yesterday. We have added the Safe Spaces Poster to our noticeboard and will get cracking with the other actions asap.'

'Thank you so much for your visit and answering all our questions'.

'Thank you for your help and reassurance'.

And finally, from the Safeguarding Team:

"The Parish Audit Programme has demonstrated a strong commitment to Safeguarding across our Parishes, while identifying practical opportunities for continuous improvement."