



Independent Chair, Diocesan Safeguarding Steering Group (DSSG)

April 2026

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Steering Group in the Diocese of Bristol.

This information pack provides an outline of the role, the skills and experience we are looking for and some further background to our Diocese.

It is critical that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that it is integral to fulfilling our call to follow Christ and our mission.

To reinforce our commitment to safeguarding in aspects of our work, we want to appoint an Independent Chair of our Diocesan Safeguarding Steering Group (DSSG).

The Group provides oversight of safeguarding within the Diocese and is a source of independent expert safeguarding advice. We follow the Church of England safeguarding policies and practice and are informed by best practice across the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Your role will be to ensure that the DSSG has an independent voice and provides challenge and scrutiny to our safeguarding policies and practice, as well as holding us to account on their implementation.

You will have extensive recent leadership experience, ideally gained within one of the appropriate statutory agencies and/or the education sector, or within the voluntary /faith sector; the ability to inspire trust; and influence and chair meetings involving statutory agencies, senior clergy and lay representatives. You, you must demonstrate a high level of integrity and willingness to listen to the voices of all those with whom the Group relates.

We have a particular focus on victims and survivors and want to improve this, and other elements our most recent independent safeguarding audit highlighted.

If this role excites you and you have the necessary skills, experience and motivation, we would like to hear from you and receive your application. Please submit your application on the Application Form and read our Applicant Guidance Notes.

If you would like to have an informal discussion, please contact GERALYN MEEHAN, Director of People and Safeguarding, 0117 9060100 or email geralyn.meehan@bristoldiocese.org

Rt Revd Neil Warwick
Bishop of Swindon and Acting Bishop of Bristol



Safeguarding in the Diocese of Bristol

In 2013, the then Bishop of Bristol, Rt Revd Mike Hill, commissioned a report from Barnardo's 'to ascertain how best to implement and support effective safeguarding arrangements in the Diocese of Bristol'.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Steering Group (DSSG) was established, with an independent chair. Significant resources were identified to ensure that the Diocese is well provisioned and capable of supporting safeguarding within parishes and working alongside statutory partners. The Diocesan Safeguarding Team is now established and includes experience, knowledge and expertise from Police, Social Care and Education sectors.

In February 2017, an audit of safeguarding arrangements in the Diocese was undertaken by SCIE. Strengths identified in the audit included:

- strong and clear leadership from the Bishop
- confidence in the Diocesan Secretary in implementing the safeguarding agenda
- who in turn has confidence in the safeguarding team
- clear awareness of areas in need of improvement

Areas for development included:

- the need to improve the management of casework
- ensuring that risk assessments in relation to persons who pose a risk are current and inform the implementation of safeguarding agreements
- greater independent membership of the DSSG; and
- a more consistent response to survivors of abuse

In addition, a further audit in 2024 of the Diocese and Cathedral as part of the national independent safeguarding audit programme being undertaken by INEQE safeguarding group commended the leadership and dedication of the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) and the Cathedral, noting a "*coherent and tangible focus on safeguarding*" and a high level of confidence in the embedded safeguarding culture.

Recommendations from both audits and other case review activity informs an ongoing safeguarding improvement plan overseen by the DSSG.

Diocesan Safeguarding Steering Group

The DSSG oversees the safeguarding work within the Diocese ensuring that safeguarding arrangements across the Diocese and within parishes are effective, concerns identified and addressed and that there is effective collaboration with statutory partners.

Membership of the DSSG comprises representatives of the diocese, parishes and statutory bodies.



Training

The Diocese has fully implemented the Learning and Development framework from the National Safeguarding Team. We provide the full suite of core safeguarding courses and the two published specialist courses (Domestic Abuse and Safer Recruitment). Due to a need identified locally we have also developed a personal safety workshop with support from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust.

There is a small team of volunteer trainers that assist in the provision of training across the Diocese. We train ordinands and staff in Trinity College (Theological Education Institution) and provide training to staff, clergy and volunteers at Bristol Cathedral.

Moving forward

Safeguarding in the Diocese of Bristol is well led and supported though there remain significant ongoing challenges. Supporting parishes to maintain safeguarding as a priority, especially with regards to the safe recruitment of volunteers and those in paid roles are key areas that require ongoing support. A new senior leadership team is being established within the Diocese which will require support and continuity to ensure that safeguarding remains a priority for the whole Diocese.

Safeguarding Governance in the Diocese of Bristol

[Safeguarding Governance - Diocese of Bristol](#)

Information regarding how safeguarding is managed in the diocese including annual reports can be found here.

[DSSG terms of Reference](#)

Audit reports

[SCIE Safeguarding Audit Report for the Diocese of Bristol - 2017](#)

[INEQE independent safeguarding audit 2024](#)

Further information:

<https://www.bristol.anglican.org/safeguarding/>



DIOCESAN BOARD OF FINANCE

Job Description and Person Specification

JOB TITLE	Independent Chair, Diocesan Safeguarding Steering Group (DSSG)
REPORTS TO	Bishop of Bristol
REMUNERATION	Honorarium (£4,000 pa) with expenses reimbursed
HOURS	10-12 days <i>per annum</i>
DURATION	3 years initial term, with possibility of extension
LOCATION	Meetings take place at: Diocesan Office, Hillside House, 1500 Parkway North, Stoke Gifford, Bristol, BS34 8YU

JOB SUMMARY

The candidate will have extensive senior safeguarding experience, with experience of case reviews, risk management and strategic partnerships. An up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding practice and legislation is essential. You do not need to be a practicing Christian, but you do need to have a strong desire and commitment to improving safeguarding practice in the Church of England.

The Independent Chair is responsible for ensuring the DSSG discharges its function, holding strategic oversight of safeguarding policy, procedure and practise across the diocese. The chair will advise and make recommendations to the diocese on the developments and overall effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.

A successful candidate will be required to undertake the training commensurate with the role and undertake appropriate clearances.

KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Bishop of Bristol
Bishop of Swindon
Bishops Council
Archdeacons of Malmesbury and Bristol, and Assistant Archdeacon
Diocesan Secretary
Diocesan Safeguarding Officer and Safeguarding Team
DSSG Members
Peers in other Dioceses and Denominations
Regional Safeguarding Lead



National Safeguarding Team

Local statutory agencies: 6 Local Authority, 2 Police, and National Probation Service

SAFEGUARDING

The Diocese of Bristol is committed to safeguarding, safer recruiting practice and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provide effective leadership of the DSSG and ensure that the DSSG:
 - o operates in accordance with its advisory and scrutiny functions outlined in the Terms of reference of the DSSG;
 - o Work effectively and in collaboration with the Bishop of Bristol and other senior staff and the DSO to ensure the DSSG has a strategic overview of safeguarding practice across the diocese
 - o Meet 4 times per year with the Bishop of Bristol and as required to address any specific issues, concerns or developments that have arisen: to raise and report any concerns/ issues as part of whistle blowing arrangements
- Work with the Director of People and Safeguarding and the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and the Safeguarding Team to ensure the highest standards of safeguarding practice are maintained across the Diocese.
 - o Meet regularly with the DSO and Director of People and Safeguarding to agree the agenda/minutes, chairing the meetings and monitoring follow up actions
 - o Ensure the safeguarding improvement plan is implemented and managed effectively
 - o Advocate that the DSSG is adequately resourced, with sufficient capacity and diversity of skills, experience and background of members of the DSSG
 - o To be involved in recruitment and succession planning of DSSG members
 - o Ensure that appropriate quality assurance and risk management processes are effectively managed by the safeguarding team with the regional safeguarding lead following code of practice
 - o Ensure that the DSSG considers the needs of victims/survivors and others effected by abuse
 - o Attend at least one Diocesan Synod meeting each year to present the safeguarding annual report/update (usually June)
 - o Attend at least one Bishop's Council *per annum*
 - o Attend national and regional chairs network meetings as arranged
 - o Engage with strategic safeguarding arrangements (Local safeguarding Partnerships) and other statutory sector partners with regards to safeguarding practice.



An outline of the role and responsibilities of the Chair is provided in Appendix 3 - [Key Roles and Responsibilities of Church Office Holders and Bodies: Practice Guidance \(2017\)](#).

PERSON SPECIFICATION

To enable us to shortlist in a fair and unbiased way it is helpful if you provide us with sufficient information to demonstrate how your skills and experiences meet or exceed the criteria outlined in the vacancy description.

Attributes	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic and/or professional qualification in social or health care, education, or legal discipline, probation or equivalent experience in a related field (i.e. Policing, Public Protection). Where appropriate to be registered with a relevant regulatory body. 	
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recent and extensive professional safeguarding knowledge and expertise in a relevant statutory, voluntary or legal/ judicial setting. - Sufficiently senior experience working within the public or voluntary sector. - Ability and experience of chairing complex, cross sector professional meetings efficiently. - Experience in an operational context of safeguarding in statutory and voluntary/faith sector. - Demonstrable commitment to the welfare of children and vulnerable adults through previous or current professional or voluntary activities 	<p>demonstrable experience of working across the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child protection - Vulnerable adults <p>Public protection arrangements</p>



Knowledge	Demonstrable knowledge and understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- current safeguarding good practice in relevant sectors including faith and voluntary sectors;- legislation and statutory and other guidance; Research and other developments that inform and promote good safeguarding practice.	An understanding of the Church of England, its organisation and governance structures.
Skills/ Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Effective negotiation and conflict resolution between agencies and individuals- Strong organisational awareness to support the effective operation of the DSSG promoting its role and function within Diocese governance<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Ensure that DSSG decisions and recommendations are fully implementedo Strong analytical approach to problem solvingo High level of attention to detail- Solution focussed approach to resolving complex situations or practice issues- Effective and clear communicator, with excellent written and verbal communication skills.<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Excellent listener and facilitator - able to manage and work with complex information across a range of topics.o Responsive and sensitive to those who need to share or disclose confidential and sensitive information, such as survivors/ victims of abuse	Effective presentation skills



Behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mature and professional approach to all aspects of the role- Ability to work effectively independently and on own initiative- Ability to contribute effectively and constructively to a wider team- Credible and respected profile, able to develop and maintain strong relationships with a variety of roles in various settings- Warm, open and approachable working style	
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- High level of personal integrity and discretion- Able to handle and manage confidential and sensitive information- Professional and positive approach to the role- Able to work with people from all ages and social backgrounds- Respectful and comfortable with the Christian ethos and objectives that underpin our work	

Date: 25/03/2026