Safeguarding Q&A: Post Makin Review November 2024

Background

Following an Independent review into the Church’s handling of the John Smyth case The Church of England published [the Makin Review on Thursday 7th November](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/independent-review-churchs-handling-smyth-case-published). Following the release of the report, subsequent media interest and public reaction, [The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby resigned from his position as the most senior bishop and leader of the Church of England](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/statements-resignation-archbishop-canterbury), head of the worldwide Anglican Communion and bishop of the diocese of Canterbury on Tuesday 12 November 2024.

In response to the report and resignation, Hereford Diocese safeguarding and senior leadership team led an online question and answer session on Tuesday 19th of November inviting parish safeguarding officers, ordained clergy including those with permission to officiate and members of diocesan synod to an open session prior to the first meeting of the new diocesan synod. The meeting provided an opportunity for individuals to address any concerns or questions about the [Makin review](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/independent-learning-lessons-review-john-smyth-qc-november-2024.pdf), safeguarding in the Church of England as well as address any questions relating specifically to Hereford Diocese.

This document is an anonymised transcript of the questions and answers from the session. A further two face-to-face group sessions are scheduled, one for each archdeaconry:

Wednesday 11th December between 5pm and 6.30 pm in The Great Hall, The Palace, Hereford.
Please confirm attendance by sending an email to: safeguarding@hereford.anglican.org

The second session will take place in the Ludlow Archdeaconry in early January details of times and location will be advertised shortly.

For anyone unable to attend, please email questions to: safeguarding@hereford.anglican.org

Questions and Answers

1. Q: Is there any support available for people who met or worked with Smyth?
	* A1. We recognise that people who had any association with Smyth may question their own judgement in not having recognised the abuse. If they have any concerns about things that they may have seen or witnessed at the time, then please contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.
	* If people need further support, then please look at the Herford Diocese website support pages. Details can be found [here](https://www.hereford.anglican.org/parish-support/safeguarding/safe-spaces/) .
2. Q: Will we need to ensure safer recruitment and DBS checks for every new PCC member?
	* Yes, this has always been a requirement, but we have updated our website to remind people of the following:
		+ ***DBS checks for PCC members*** *There are three levels of DBS checking – basic, standard, and enhanced levels. Information on these levels can be found*[*online*](https://dbs-online.org.uk/which-dbs-check)*.*
		+ *The Charity Commission****recommends*** *trustees always obtain a DBS check when eligible,****the Diocese of Hereford expects all PCC members to get a DBS check done at the ‘basic’ level.***
		+ *If a PCC sponsors and approves, in its own name, children’s, young people or vulnerable adult’s work then the members of the PCC will be****eligible****for an Enhanced DBS without barred list check.*
		+ ***Further detail if required.****PCC members, although charity trustees, are not by virtue of their membership of the PCC engaging in ‘regulated activity’ with children or vulnerable adults and are therefore not automatically eligible for enhanced DBS disclosures (with barred list checks). Charity trustees are eligible for enhanced DBS disclosures (without barred list checks) if the charity qualifies as a “children’s charity” or a “vulnerable adults’ charity.”   We will have to provide evidence this is the case if an enhanced check is requested.*
		+ ***Provision of a Sunday School would not generally satisfy this requirement because the teaching of children in church on Sundays is, as a matter of law, an activity carried out in furtherance of the incumbent’s duty (under Canon C 24.4) to “instruct the parishioners of the benefice, or cause them to be instructed, in the Christian faith”. Incumbents must all have an enhanced DBS check.  PCCs have no specific duties in relation to providing instruction in the Christian faith.  A careful analysis will be required to see whether the PCC does qualify, there can be no blanket approach.***
		+ *For example, if a PCC is a charity and it sponsors and approves, in its own name, work with children, young people or vulnerable adults, by entering into an employment contract with a youth worker to run a youth club or other children’s activities or entering into a contractual arrangement with a worker to provide a regular care service to adults who receive a health or social care service, then the PCC may qualify as a children’s or vulnerable adults’ charity (as the case may be) and in such circumstances PCC members would be****eligible****for an enhanced DBS check.   PCCs, however, may not meet the definition of a “children’s charity” or “vulnerable adults’ charity.”  You are advised to seek advice from the safeguarding team in relation to such matters.*
		+ ***Every member of a PCC must complete a Fit and Proper Persons Form and sign that declaration to say that they are not disqualified from holding that position.***
3. Q: Will the recommendations look specifically at an independent body to supervise safeguarding?
	* The Jay report already recommended consideration of safeguarding as an independent body. The response team have looked at whether an Independent Safeguarding Body or a Scrutiny Body which would be independent from the Church of England could be the solution. This will be discussed at the General Synod meeting in February 2025.
	* It should be noted that steps have already been taken by the National Safeguarding Team to achieve levels of independence by introducing the new pathfinder safeguarding model. The pathfinder model introduces the role of Regional Safeguarding Leads who will supervise Diocesan Safeguarding Officers.
4. Q: Will the diocese make signposting for parishes to distribute?
	* Information is available on the safeguarding pages on the diocese website, and we encourage people to look at these pages. We have just created a detailed FAQ page. This has been recently updated. Hereford Diocese safeguarding pages can be found [here](https://www.hereford.anglican.org/safeguarding).
5. Q: The scandal seems to have links to Parachurch Organisations. Do we have links to those organisations so we can work with them to improve their safeguarding practices?
	* We recognise the need for greater understanding of where parachurch organisations operate within the diocese so we can link in to offer safeguarding support. We have provided support in the past but our relationship with them is often through personal contact rather than formal involvement.
	* Post meeting, the senior leadership team shared with each other a list of known parachurch organisations operating in the diocese. There are no known concerns but if anyone is concerned about any parachurch organisation, please can they contact the diocesan safeguarding team with information.
	* The diocesan safeguarding team and senior leadership team are also conscious of newer / ecumenical churches with whom we may have a loose relationship but there are gaps in our knowledge of their practices which we seek to improve with further support and information from others. Please contact the diocesan safeguarding team if you can offer any assistance and information.
6. Q: Can the Bishop and others assure us that safeguarding concerns raised with the diocese are being investigated and not left to linger?
	* We do deal with all safeguarding concerns, nothing is left to linger, and we act straight away. We discuss new concerns appropriately and allocate tasks and actions expeditiously. All concerns are recorded on the National Case Management System.
	* The safeguarding team work closely with the key stakeholder partners when carrying out investigations and make referrals to statutory agencies when necessary.
7. Q: Comments were made about whether the burden of future compliance in safeguarding would rest solely with PCCs and parish clergy, or be more widely shared? The responses to these comments are listed below:
	* Good safeguarding practice and culture, and accountability, are a matter for all of us in the diocese, whatever role we hold. Remember that safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.
	* Each organisation within the diocese is encouraged to look at their practice in line with any new recommendations that come out of the Jay-Wilkinson review when they are published. Support and training will be available. We do recognise the good practice that is already going on in parishes and that most of the findings in the [Makin review](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/independent-learning-lessons-review-john-smyth-qc-november-2024.pdf) relate to practice that has since been improved. We are confident that if parishes are carrying out current best practice guidance, then they will not be subject to an unreasonably increased burden.

Further questions and comments during the session fell outside the scope of those present. For example, a question about the role of other agencies cited in the Makin report where a number of police forces failed to act on information was acknowledged and it was recognised that other organisations must undertake their own scrutiny and investigation. A further comment from a participant highlighted the number of previous reports into the abuse and failure to act on information about Smyth – this was framed as an observation rather than a specific question. Individuals may wish to read the details of reports relating to Smyth, which predate the Makin review. Details of all these reports can be found in the [Makin review](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/independent-learning-lessons-review-john-smyth-qc-november-2024.pdf).

The following are not questions that were raised during the online session but are mandatory information and support for all parish and benefice officers to read and action:

Further information on safeguarding can be found in “[*The Parish Safeguarding Handbook*](https://tools.parishdashboards.org.uk/storage/app/media/Resources/parish-safeguarding-handbook.pdf)”. Please [click here](https://tools.parishdashboards.org.uk/storage/app/media/Resources/parish-safeguarding-handbook.pdf) for more information.

How can we make safeguarding more prominent in our churches?

The following list of eight simple digital changes can be added to a parish/benefice website and Church Near You profile:

1. Advertise Safeguarding events on the home page of the parish/benefice website.
2. Consider having an individual Safeguarding tab and make it stand out with a distinct colour or font.
3. Consider neurodiversity when designing your webpage. Use plain English, a clear font, such as Open Sans and avoid using red and yellow fonts.
4. The Safeguarding page should be one click away from the home page.
5. Simple and clear information on the Safeguarding page.
6. Consider having a picture of your Parish Safeguarding Officer along with their contact number and email address.
7. Add a picture of the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer with phone number and email address.
8. Add links to Safeguarding information, such as policy documents or relevant charities.

Notes and references:

* Support for victims and survivors of abuse can be found [here](https://www.hereford.anglican.org/parish-support/safeguarding/safe-spaces/)
* Safer Spaces offers a phoneline. Opening hours are Monday to Friday 9am – 9pm, Saturday 9am-1pm and Sunday from 1pm-5pm (excluding bank holidays, subject to review). Tel: 0300 303 1056
* The Makin Review is published in full [online here](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/independent-learning-lessons-review-john-smyth-qc-november-2024.pdf)
* The statement regarding the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Revd Justin Welby can be found [online here](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/statements-resignation-archbishop-canterbury)
* The diocesan senior leadership team comprises: The Bishop of Hereford, The Rt Revd Richard Jackson, The Ven Dr Fiona Gibson, Archdeacon of Ludlow, The Ven Derek Chedzey, Archdeacon of Hereford, Sam Pratley, Diocesan Secretary.
* Other senior managers in the organisation who support safeguarding work include: The Bishop’s Chaplain, Revd Nicol Kinrade, Sarah Whitelock Director of Communications, Carl Steventon, Diocesan Safeguarding Officer and Lisa Anderson, Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.
* Hereford Diocese website can be found [here](https://www.hereford.anglican.org/safeguarding)
* Support and counselling for clergy and other church leaders who may be supporting victims and survivors or themselves be affected by these issues can be found [here](https://www.hereford.anglican.org/parish-support/clergy/wellbeing/)