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# Summary Report Safeguarding Audit of Arrangements for Yr Eglwys yng Nghymru / Church in Wales

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## **Introduction**

### **Reason for requesting a safeguarding audit**

This is a summary report of a focused Safeguarding audit commissioned by Yr Eglwys yng Nghymru/ Church in Wales with a view to an independent external review of its safeguarding processes and policies. Thirtyone:eight were asked to complete the audit in a staged manner with certain key priority areas reviewed this year, giving an opportunity for any suggested actions to be embedded by the Diocese before a further review is undertaken in the future.

The Audit is to follow thirtyone:eight's standards-based framework and in line with the requirements of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures with the provision of an audit report highlighting strengths, areas of weakness and recommended actions to strengthen safeguarding for the organisation upon the conclusion of the assignment.

The Church in Wales has undergone a significant period of change in the appointments of key management roles, and these have resulted in changes of structure and governance. There has been a renewed focus on how safeguarding is managed, and policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated over the last two years. Thirtyone:eight have been asked to initially focus the audit on three key priority areas:

- Governance
- Safeguarding Policy
- Working with those who may pose a risk.

### **About Thirtyone:eight**

Thirtyone:eight is a UK Christian charity providing a range of services to support churches and other faith-based organisations to protect vulnerable people. "Our vision is a world where every child and adult can feel, and be, safe". We aim to do this by equipping, empowering and encouraging organisations to create safer environments, respond to abuse, and raise their standards of safeguarding practice. Our name is taken from Proverbs 31 v 8: "Speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the rights of all who are vulnerable".

We are a leading safeguarding organisation within the faith sector and offer a range of services to support organisations, including: a DBS checking service, a variety of safeguarding training courses, policy support, consultancy, safeguarding audits, risk assessments, case reviews and international safeguarding advice.

### **Methodology**

During the safeguarding audit a number of documents were reviewed to assist the assessment process. These included Safeguarding policy documentation and policies from Human Resources. The audit also looked at strategic documents relating to safeguarding and internal process documents for the Provincial Safeguarding Team.

Additionally, numerous interviews were held over Microsoft Teams with a wide spectrum of individuals involved in Safeguarding in the Church in Wales, including the Archbishop, Ministry Area Safeguarding Officers, members of the Provincial Safeguarding team, members of Safeguarding Panel and Safeguarding Committee.

This audit was undertaken at a specific time and therefore provides a snapshot of the safeguarding arrangements and culture at the time the audit was undertaken. The findings of the audit are based on the evidence seen at this time.

This is an independent audit, based upon thirtyone:eight's 10 Safeguarding Standards. These standards provide a comprehensive framework for successfully auditing an organisation, and therefore equip that organisation to engage in safeguarding best practice. As this exercise for the Church in Wales, was based on a selection of 3 areas under thirtyone:eight's 10 standards, the numbering used in this Report is based on thirtyone:eight's order of these three areas (i.e., Standards 1, 3 and 10)

## Summary of Audit

### Strengths

Overall, the Reviewer found this focussed audit on the safeguarding in the Church in Wales in the three areas that thirtyone:eight were asked to review; governance, safeguarding policies and working with those that may pose a risk, in a very positive place.

Many acknowledged that a great deal of work has been undertaken in these three crucial areas and this has included the revision of policies, procedures and the investment in staff.

A number of participants spoke of the previous lack of a clear governance structure and felt this had changed over the last few years with the recruitment of the Safeguarding Director and an Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Panel and the formation of the Safeguarding Committee.

Initially there appeared to be a lack clarity around where safeguarding sat within the organisation and although the Lead Bishop had the responsibility for safeguarding, in reality, it was managed by the Safeguarding staff team and a safeguarding panel who reviewed every case that the safeguarding team investigated. Panel members were provided with all related documents for the cases, but their review was lightly held, due to the volume and repetition of cases being reviewed on a regular basis.

The recruitment of an Independent Chair who had previously been a Director of Social Services brought fresh insight on the need for change, alongside the recommendations of the IICSA report<sup>1</sup> i.e., a change in senior leadership and a real desire to put efficient working practices in place.

Recommendations were made that a Safeguarding Director should be recruited, and the individual employed had a senior Public Protection Police background. This has facilitated the changes in how the Safeguarding team are managed and the revision of key documents. The Director reports directly to the Panel, the Archbishop, and to the Safeguarding Committee.

The Safeguarding Committee was formed around a year to eighteen months ago and this has the Archbishop, two archdeacons, those with legal experience and those who have key roles in the church within its constitution. Their role is to establish the future and current direction of safeguarding in the Church. They oversee the implementation of safeguarding and ratify

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<sup>1</sup> [The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse | IICSA Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse](#)

documents at the highest level, thereby giving safeguarding a higher profile at governance level.

It is clear that the Archbishop has a genuine understanding of safeguarding and a desire to embed it in the church and his investment in time attending this meeting is important. In addition, he has recorded a video message raising awareness which is available on the Safeguarding website. The Archbishop has instigated mandatory safeguarding training for all clerics which reinforces the importance of the training.

The initiative to recruit experienced safeguarding officers (MASO's) for the Ministry areas is still in the early days, but this will help to devolve information to the local churches that they are responsible for.

### **Areas for Improvement**

The participants the Reviewer spoke with, expressed a real desire for continued improvement. At present as there is clearer governance in place it ensures that decisions are ratified at the highest level, but it is also apparent that there is still considerable work to be done to share this vision wider with the local churches.

Training, whilst not a focus of this audit, was regularly mentioned as being integral to sharing that message. Those that provide training were well spoken of, but they are now more integrated into the strategy of sharing the safeguarding vision rather than working in isolation in their specific diocesan areas. This was seen as a positive step.

An area that was identified as not being visually focussed on safeguarding were the six Dioceses that cover the country of Wales. The information on their main websites were greatly varied and there was no sense of safeguarding being promoted in their newsletters or promotional material. It is understood that responsibility sits with the Provincial team, but the Diocesan website is probably accessed more regularly by a local church rather than the Church in Wales website. A means for improved access to consistent safeguarding material across all 6 dioceses would be an asset.

### **Key messages from People's Voice**

The key messages from those that the Reviewer spoke to, was that there was a "lot of work still to do but that they were making excellent progress". Many people commented on their commitment to safeguarding and there was no sense of it being a 'tick box exercise'. Instead, there was a strong sense that this was seen as a priority, where people with past experience and knowledge had put themselves forward to help drive through change, many doing this in a voluntary capacity.

Many acknowledged the ongoing work of the trainers and the importance of their message reaching many areas of church life. It was stated that the training was accessible and largely available at all levels of the organisation. However, comments were made that areas such as domestic abuse, financial abuse, physical chastisement, and indecent images were still areas to be addressed. Going forward it was also recognised that there is still work to be done in relation to the support and guidance around survivors and safer recruitment.

Those interviewed, both employed and volunteering felt well supported and generally felt workloads were manageable and well supervised.

## Recommendations

The recommendations below, identify areas where safeguarding can be promoted in the Dioceses and encourage local churches to fully embrace being a Safe Church.

<p><b>Standard 1 – Governance.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My Church People database to be used as a tool to identify local churches that require increased levels of support, training and guidance</li> <li>• Clear information on every Diocesan website page providing guidance on how to seek support for victims, survivors or interested parties.</li> <li>• Web links to the central Safeguarding Team to report concerns or how to contact them.</li> <li>• Diocesan newsletters to have a regular focus on safeguarding, promoting good news stories and identifying areas of risk.</li> <li>• Clear guidance to be provided for parishes around the expectation of governance within the local churches.</li> <li>• Clear guidance for trustees (members of parish council)</li> <li>• Guidance information requiring churches to undertake risk assessments for all activities, locations and groups, and an available RA template</li> <li>• All policy documents to specifically address safeguarding responsibilities to ensure they are embedded throughout the procedures of the Church in Wales.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Standard 3 – Safeguarding Policy.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact details of Provincial Safeguarding Team to be added to the Safeguarding Policy</li> <li>• Review Introduction to Safeguarding and Promoting Safer Practice for Children &amp; Adults at Risk with consideration to the amalgamation of information.</li> <li>• Consider the use of hyperlinks and cross referencing across the documents.</li> <li>• Safeguarding advice, policies and guidance documents to be promoted through dioceses newsletter and disseminated by the MASO's on a regular basis.</li> <li>• Churches to be required to have a Commitment to Safeguarding on their church websites.</li> <li>• Safeguarding Poster to be reviewed to highlight key information.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Standard 10 – Working with those who may pose a risk.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear messaging of available information managing those that may pose a risk.</li> <li>• Increased information on support groups for offenders, those under investigation or their families.</li> </ul>

**Audit Undertaken by:**

Dawn Watson – Senior Safeguarding Advisor

**Date Completed:**

29.03.2023



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