



Safeguarding Authority Consultation

Explanatory Document

APRIL/MAY 2026

A message from the Executive Chair, and Deputy Lead Bishop for Safeguarding

Thank you for taking the time to read this document and to engage with this consultation exercise. Your feedback is vital as we continue the work of enhancing and strengthening safeguarding in the Church of England.

Following General Synod's [overwhelming support](#) for our strategic plans to rebuild trust and deliver professional, independent safeguarding across the Church, the work to translate that vision into a detailed, structured programme of change is well underway.

At the heart of these reforms is the creation of a new national safeguarding organisation that will operate independently of Church hierarchy, governed by a majority-independent Board. This consultation seeks your views on the detailed design of this organisation, referred to in the consultation as the "Authority".

Whether you are a survivor, a parish volunteer, a safeguarding professional, a Church officer, or a member of the wider public, your perspective will help us refine these proposals. Your feedback and viewpoints are essential and will help ensure the proposals are robust, sustainable, and fit for purpose.

We both want to express our sincere thanks to everyone who has already contributed to this journey of change and reform in the Church. Your continued engagement is vital if we are to ensure that safeguarding continues to support and embody the best expression of Christian faith, and if we are to develop a system that everyone can truly trust.

Thank you for your time, expertise, and commitment to rebuilding trust, strengthening safeguarding and making the Church a safer place for all.



Dame Christine Ryan,
Independent Executive Chair



Bishop Joanne Grenfell,
Deputy Lead Bishop for Safeguarding

Background to the consultation

The Safeguarding Structures Reform Programme is developing detailed proposals to strengthen and enhance safeguarding in the Church. The programme team are now ready to share the proposals developed so far and invite your feedback through this consultation exercise. In doing so, you will play an active part in helping the team to strengthen and refine the proposals, before the Archbishops' Council receives final recommendations for consideration and approval.

There has been a huge amount of work to get to this stage, marked by a preceding period of intense reflection within the Church that followed a number of external reviews into Church safeguarding practice. These independent reviews led to several key conclusions and recommendations that underpin the proposals set out in the consultation today.

Notably, previous reviews have highlighted a critical need for a safeguarding system that is coherent, credible, and operationally independent of Church hierarchy. The creation of a new national safeguarding organisation aims to address long-standing concerns regarding complexity, inconsistency, and real or perceived institutional pressure in professional safeguarding decisions.

Following the General Synod vote in February 2026, the programme team, under the leadership of independent Executive Chair, Dame Christine Ryan, has continued the work of developing the approved strategic vision into a detailed operational design of the proposed national Authority.

Early engagement highlighted several consistent themes, and this consultation aims to sense-check the proposals against three objectives:

1. Independence

We want safeguarding across the Church to be overseen by an independent and impartial safeguarding organisation. In this Authority, safeguarding professionals are empowered to use their professional judgement when making safeguarding decisions, free from inappropriate influence from the Church. We want safeguarding professionals and volunteers at all levels to be well-supported by their peers, within a single, independent professional structure that drives culture change across the whole Church.

2. Excellence and consistency

We want safeguarding services to be excellent by secular standards, operating within a culture of continuous improvement. These services must be consistent across the whole Church, from parish to palace, with equivalent policies, processes and principles being used, which are sustainable and fit for purpose. We want to support people across the Church to carry out their safeguarding duties well.

3. Clarity and accountability

Everyone in the Church must have absolute clarity about their safeguarding responsibilities, particularly charity trustees and leaders. By reducing system complexity, these reforms will ensure that leaders and trustees of our Church bodies and organisations take full responsibility for their duties and are held accountable for their performance. We want to restore trust in Church safeguarding by promoting clarity, transparency and accountability at every level.

Delivering a safeguarding system that is independent, professional, and trusted is the central priority of the Safeguarding Structures Reform Programme. This consultation represents the next stage in the journey to deliver the reforms.

Your feedback to this consultation will help the programme team develop a final blueprint that will define how the Authority is legally established, constituted, and structured as an independent organisation.

What might this mean for you?

Delivering structural change is complex, however, if we succeed in reforming safeguarding structures, rebuilding trust and strengthening safeguarding in the Church, this could lead to real and tangible positive impacts for volunteers, staff and worshippers.

The new Authority and the wider Church safeguarding system must strive to address the following ambitions in the future:



For Individuals: A Church where every person can worship with confidence, knowing that their safety and care are always our highest priority.



For Parishes and Communities: A system that empowers local churches to thrive, where safeguarding best practice is woven naturally and with ease into the fabric of daily community life.



For Safeguarding Professionals: A system that truly supports vital safeguarding work - one that removes the burden of complex bureaucracy and provides high-quality professional resources.



For Church Leadership: A sustainable system that ensures clear accountability for Church leaders, with safeguarding integral to both mission and growth.



For the Whole Church: A safeguarding system that is deeply trusted, ensuring the Church remains a cherished and safe presence in every community, from parish to palace.

Future staffing, policy development, and complaints processes

This first consultation focuses on the structure and independence of the proposed safeguarding Authority. It is not seeking views on current or future policy work, nor is it seeking views on the staffing or employment arrangements of the organisation. Formal HR processes and statutory consultation with staff who may be affected by the safeguarding reforms will begin only once the final design of the new Authority has been approved.

The programme team, working closely with NST colleagues and local safeguarding teams, are giving careful consideration to any future period of transition to ensure Church safeguarding services remain constant and uninterrupted.

The work to standardise how complaints about safeguarding practice are handled across the Church of England is ongoing and progressing well. Following extensive early development work and stakeholder consultation in the autumn of 2025, the programme team plans to pilot a new complaints process with volunteer organisations later this year. The purpose of the pilot is to make sure

the process meets expectations for everyone who will use it. If your diocesan or cathedral safeguarding team is interested in participating in the pilot, [please email the programme team](#) for further information.

How to contribute to the consultation

This consultation exercise is necessarily technical in parts. Your feedback, however detailed, will be crucial in helping the team revise and refine the new Authority design.

To participate fully, we recommend that you read this Explanatory Briefing document alongside the online consultation as you complete it.

You can access the [online consultation form here](#) and submissions can be made up until 11pm on Sunday 17th May 2026.

The time required to complete the consultation will vary depending on the individual and their prior knowledge and experience. We welcome both brief and detailed responses, as well as joint responses on behalf of a team, group, or Church body. Please respond to as many or as few questions as you would like to.

To support engagement with the consultation process, the programme team has scheduled a number of information briefings. The goal of the sessions is to ensure everyone who wishes to submit a response has the clarity they need to engage fully with the consultation process. All of the sessions will cover the same content, including:

- An overview of the new Authority's design principles
- Guidance on how to submit a meaningful, informed response to the consultation
- An open Q&A space to answer questions and gather initial feedback

Targeted online briefings

Specific groups of Church officers have already been sent calendar invitations. If you have not received an invitation but believe you should have, please contact the team by emailing safestructures@churchofengland.org.

When	Who
21 April	National Safeguarding Team
22 April	Diocesan and Cathedral Safeguarding Officers and DSAP and Cathedral Safeguarding Chairs
23 April	Diocesan Secretaries and Cathedral Chief Operating Officers
24 April	Senior Church Leaders
28 April	National Safeguarding Team
29 April	Diocesan and Cathedral Safeguarding Officers and DSAP and Cathedral Safeguarding Chairs
30 April	Senior Church Leaders
30 April	Diocesan Secretaries and Cathedral Chief Operating Officers
01 May	Senior Church Leaders
05 May	National Safeguarding Team

Survivors and victims

Tailored information briefings specifically for survivors of Church-related abuse will run separately. These sessions will also be advertised in the NST's Survivor Participation Newsletter and will be coordinated by a dedicated Survivor Participation Officer who is part of the programme team. Careful consideration is being given to these briefings ensuring they are handled with care. Please email participation.safeguarding@churchofengland.org to express an interest in attending one of these briefings.

When	When
21 April	12pm to 2pm
22 April	5pm to 7pm
23 April	2pm to 4pm
11 May	9.30am to 11.30am

Open briefings

If you are not in one of the targeted groups above but wish to participate, the programme team is hosting two open briefings. Each will cover the same content. Please email safestructures@churchofengland.org to register your attendance and to receive a joining link. These sessions are open to all.

When	When
05 May	6pm to 8pm

06 May	1pm to 3pm
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If you have any questions about the consultation exercise or process, please email the programme team at safestructures@churchofengland.org.

The deadline to submit a response to the consultation is 11pm on Sunday 17th May 2026.

Next steps following the consultation

Once the consultation closes, the programme team will begin a formal analysis of all the consultation responses that have been received. Every response will be carefully considered to identify key themes, technical challenges, and areas where the proposed design requires further refinement.

Reporting back

A report summarising feedback and responses will be submitted to the General Synod in July 2026, providing a transparent overview of the feedback received and how these insights are influencing the ongoing development of the new Authority design. Engagement sessions in the run up to July General Synod will further allow key stakeholders the opportunity to comment on the consultation findings and provide final feedback.

A final model for the structure and independence of the safeguarding Authority, based on the consultation findings and further technical analysis will then be produced. This will be the blueprint for how the new safeguarding Authority will function. Following agreement by the Safeguarding Structures Reform Programme Board, the Archbishops' Council will then receive the final model for its consideration and approval.

Implementation

Following any approval, the programme team can begin the process of legally establishing the organisation and recruiting to the Board of the new Authority.

Formal HR processes and statutory consultation with staff who may be affected by the safeguarding reforms will begin only once the final design of the new Authority has been approved.

The programme team will continue to work closely with all colleagues responsible for delivering Church safeguarding services to ensure that safeguarding activity remains uninterrupted throughout any future period of transition.

Consultation commentary

The following is detailed information relating to the three primary sections of the consultation:

1. Independence
2. Excellence and Consistency
3. Clarity and Accountability

These sections correspond with the relevant sections of the [online consultation form](#).

The proposals

The following proposals represent the latest developments and are subject to formal governance approval. Where the text uses a definitive term - such as stating the Authority "will" take a specific action - this is intended solely to elicit feedback on that specific proposal. It should not be read as a concrete outcome.

Your feedback through this consultation exercise will help the programme team shape the final blueprint for the Authority, subject to relevant approvals.

SECTION 1: INDEPENDENCE

1. Independence

Organisation

- 1.1. In order to promote independence in Church safeguarding, we want to establish a new safeguarding authority. The Authority will be a legal entity, separate from the Archbishops' Council and all

other Church bodies, acting as a centre of excellence for Church safeguarding, providing high-quality safeguarding services to the Church, and scrutinising the safeguarding work of Church bodies to provide assurance of standards. We want the Authority to be a registered charity – though this will require approval from the Charity Commission.¹

Governance

- 1.2. The rules for governing the Authority will be set out in publicly available constitutional documents. The Authority will be overseen by a majority-independent Board, which will have legal accountability for its management and administration. The Board will set organisational vision, strategy and policy, and will monitor the performance of the Authority. If the Authority is a registered charity, Board members will be charity trustees, responsible for ensuring compliance with legal requirements and the charity's purpose. The Board will have up to eleven members, a majority of whom must not be Church officers.² Collectively, the Board will possess expertise in relevant areas including safeguarding, governance, finance and organisational leadership.
- 1.3. The Authority's constitution will require the Board to ensure that the voices of people with lived experience of abuse inform its work. This could be through a reference panel or similar arrangement.
- 1.4. The Board will apply a rigorous framework to identify and prevent conflicts of interest among Board members, and will also have processes to remove or suspend Board members when required (for example, due to serious misconduct). When a position on the Board is vacant, the Board will recruit a new person to fill the vacancy.
- 1.5. The Board will commission an independent review of the Authority's effectiveness at least every three years, to be conducted by reviewers with relevant expertise (including in safeguarding).
- 1.6. The day-to-day work of the Authority will be led by a chief executive, known as the Chief Safeguarding Officer, who will be appointed by the Board. The Chief Safeguarding Officer will be accountable to the Board for the performance of the organisation and for putting into practice the vision, strategy and policies which

the Board has set. The Board will adopt a scheme of delegation which clearly defines the responsibilities of the Chief Safeguarding Officer and the responsibilities of the Board.

Protected functions

- 1.7. The Authority's constitution will define some its functions as "protected functions." This means that, while the Board will agree policies or processes to be followed in relation to these functions, it will not be involved in everyday operational decision-making. These will be functions where the independence of professional judgement in safeguarding is especially important—such as the assessment of safeguarding risk in individual cases, audits and reviews of safeguarding performance in Church bodies, and the handling of individual complaints.

Public accountability and reporting

- 1.8. The Authority will produce and publish an annual report. The annual report will present evidence about the performance of the Authority, provide an independent overview of the effectiveness of safeguarding across the Church of England, and describe any cultural or legal issues in the Church which are impacting the effectiveness of safeguarding. It will also include information about how the Authority is using its funding.
- 1.9. The annual report will be publicly available on the Authority's website. The report will also be submitted to the General Synod and to an external oversight body. We hope that a parliamentary or governmental body will act as external authority (subject to the agreement of the body in question), or another suitable external body. Representatives of the Authority may then be called to appear before the General Synod or the external oversight body to provide evidence or answer questions.
- 1.10. The Chief Safeguarding Officer will have a formal reporting line to the external oversight body. If the Chief Safeguarding Officer believes that any of the protected functions of the Authority are at risk of inappropriate influence from the Church, the Board, or any other party, they must disclose this as soon as possible to the external oversight body and provide relevant supporting evidence. Such disclosures must be declared in the Authority's annual report.

Funding

1.11. The work of the Authority will be funded by the Church Commissioners for England. In the short term, funding will be provided through the Archbishops' Council (or Church of England National Services), until funds can be provided by the Church Commissioners directly.³ As both the Archbishops' Council and the Church Commissioners are registered charities, they will be legally required to monitor how the Authority is using this funding and assure themselves that it is being used effectively and in accordance with charitable purposes - but they may not direct or control the Authority or its work.⁴

Operations

- 1.12. The Authority will employ staff to perform key safeguarding functions. This will include responding to safeguarding concerns and allegations relating to senior clergy (archbishops, bishops and deans), and the assessment and management of risk in other complex cases. The Authority will lead safeguarding casework relating to senior clergy because these offices hold national leadership responsibilities, and are funded by the Church Commissioners rather than local Church bodies. The Authority will engage with diocesan and cathedral staff and trustees as appropriate while undertaking this work.
- 1.13. It is proposed that diocesan and cathedral safeguarding staff will continue to be employed by diocesan bodies and cathedral chapters.⁵ The Authority will support safeguarding professionals, embedding them in a single, independent professional structure that drives culture change across the whole Church. It will work to strengthen links between safeguarding professionals working in different contexts, including through group supervision, networking and professional development opportunities. It will provide guidance, training, advice and policy materials for safeguarding staff to use which are aligned with the Authority's high standards for safeguarding operations.
- 1.14. The Authority will provide guidance and assurance for trustees of diocesan and cathedral bodies, to assist them in fulfilling their safeguarding duties. The Authority will monitor and scrutinise

safeguarding work in dioceses and cathedrals, ensuring that safeguarding professionals are free to use their professional judgement at all times. Safeguarding staff must inform the Authority if they feel their independent professional judgement is at risk.

Notes

1. You can read more about how the Charity Commission decides which organisations can be registered charities [here](#).
2. We are exploring what definition of “Church officer” the Authority should use. For example, a Church officer could be defined as being a person who is appointed or elected by, or on behalf of, the Church to a post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid.
3. The funding powers of the Church Commissioners for England are described in legislation (in the [National Institutions Measure 1998](#)). A change to the law will therefore be required to enable the Church Commissioners to fund the Authority directly.
4. The Charity Commission provides guidance to charity trustees about due diligence and monitoring requirements which charities must fulfil when granting funding to other bodies. Guidance can be found [here](#).
5. If necessary, this decision may be reviewed following the establishment of the Authority.

SECTION 2: EXCELLENCE AND CONSISTENCY

2. Excellence and consistency

- 2.1. The Authority will carry out a wide range of functions relating to safeguarding, including:
 - Casework functions
 - Policy functions
 - Advisory functions
 - Scrutiny functions

These safeguarding functions will be underpinned by essential supporting functions. Together, these functions will promote high standards in safeguarding, and foster consistency in safeguarding services across the Church of England.

- 2.2. Many of the Authority's functions are currently performed by the Archbishops' Council's National Safeguarding Team. We are proposing that relevant functions will be carefully transferred to the Authority, ensuring that areas of current good practice are retained within the new framework.

Casework functions

- 2.3. We want the Authority to be a centre for excellence in safeguarding casework. As noted in the previous section, the Authority will directly respond to safeguarding concerns and allegations relating to archbishops, bishops and deans. It will assess and manage safeguarding risk relating to these senior national roles, in consultation with local trustees and/or safeguarding officers where appropriate.
- 2.4. Diocesan and cathedral safeguarding officers will also be required to refer a safeguarding case to the Authority's casework team, if it meets specified criteria (for example, when the case is complex or spans multiple dioceses). The Authority will consider whether such cases have met a defined threshold for escalation. If the threshold has been met, the Authority will lead the process to assess and manage safeguarding risk, in consultation with local trustees and/or safeguarding officers. Where the threshold has not been met, the Authority will advise the relevant Church body how the case should be handled.
- 2.5. The Authority will report serious safeguarding issues to the relevant authorities (such as the police, local authorities, and the Charity Commission) in a timely manner, including when it believes a person is at immediate risk of harm.
- 2.6. The Authority will regularly review its casework practice, and where necessary it will commission external safeguarding experts to support this.

Policy functions

- 2.7. The Authority will develop safeguarding policies and standards for the Church of England, setting out expectations for how Church bodies should fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities. In some cases, established safeguarding policies and standards will be adopted by the Authority, while in other cases policies may be reviewed, adapted, revised or replaced.
- 2.8. When developing or reviewing safeguarding policies and standards, the Authority will consult extensively with people who have experienced abuse, as well as with people across the Church. Consultation will include in-person and virtual events, and opportunities to submit written feedback. Consultation is vitally important to ensure that policies are fit for purpose, easy to understand, and reflects the reality of safeguarding work. The Authority will be required to demonstrate how it has responded to feedback when publishing policy and standards documents.
- 2.9. Where required, policies will be submitted to the General Synod for approval. Policies which have been approved by the General Synod will become Codes of Practice, which it is mandatory for relevant persons to follow.¹ Failure to comply with a mandatory Code of Practice would continue to be a disciplinary offence.
- 2.10. The Authority will provide guidance for Church bodies regarding the levels of resource required to meet the expected standards (e.g., indicative staffing levels). It will be the responsibility of local Church bodies and the National Church Institutions to ensure that adequate resources are available to meet these requirements.

Advisory functions

- 2.11. The Authority will provide advice, guidance and resources to Church bodies, supporting them to meet the high standards which the Authority has set and promoting consistency in safeguarding practice. Advice delivered in this way is intended to support, not replace, local decision-making.
- 2.12. The Authority will provide up to date safeguarding advice and support to Church bodies. This will include policy guidance, user-friendly templates, and the criteria for meeting required standards

and practice. The Authority will also provide a telephone helpline for urgent queries from safeguarding professionals.

- 2.13. The Authority will set a national framework for safeguarding learning and development. This will include e-learning modules, to be completed online by people across the Church, and materials for safeguarding trainers to use during in-person training sessions. The Authority will directly deliver training, including to senior leaders (such as bishops, deans and others).
- 2.14. The Authority will provide reflective professional supervision to Diocesan and Cathedral Safeguarding Officers. Supervision sessions will provide safeguarding officers with access to holistic support from an experienced professional, working through challenging issues and identifying areas for development.
- 2.15. The Authority will undertake data analysis, research and evaluation to identify good practice for Church safeguarding and areas for development or improvement.
- 2.16. The Authority will enable people with lived experience of abuse to participate in research, policy development and other activities, ensuring their insights meaningfully inform the Authority's work.
- 2.17. The Authority intends to provide digital infrastructure (such as a casework management system) for Church bodies to use, to enable the consistent, efficient and compliant recording, storage and retrieval of information about safeguarding cases. It is important that digital infrastructure reflects the high standards set by the Authority, and enables Church bodies to meet these standards.

Scrutiny functions

- 2.18. The Authority will scrutinise and monitor safeguarding performance in Church bodies, checking that they are meeting expected standards for safeguarding and that mandatory policies are being followed. Scrutiny functions are intended to provide assurance of the quality and consistency of safeguarding practice to local trustees and the general public.
- 2.19. The Authority will continuously collect data from Church bodies to monitor safeguarding practice. Appropriately anonymised data will

be gathered automatically, through digital systems, as well as through regular practice observation and other quality assurance activities.

- 2.20. The Authority will oversee a regular cycle of in-depth safeguarding audits of every Diocesan Board of Finance, bishop's office and cathedral. During the audit process, evidence will be gathered to determine whether each Church body is meeting the expected safeguarding standards and to assess progress since its last audit. Published findings will provide a clear evaluation of whether safeguarding standards are being met, summarising strengths, highlighting areas requiring improvement, and making associated recommendations. Church bodies will have the opportunity to check reports for factual accuracy before the Authority conducts final quality assurance checks. The Authority will publish all audit reports on its website and Church bodies should similarly make their audit reports publicly available.
- 2.21. Where a serious safeguarding failure is identified in a diocesan body, cathedral or parish church, the Authority may carry out an emergency inspection of safeguarding practice in that body. Inspections will focus on the issue identified, but may broaden in scope where other concerns are raised during the inspection. Following the inspection, a written report on the findings and the actions required to address them, will be published by the authority.
- 2.22. Following publication of both emergency inspection and audit reports, Church bodies will be required to submit an action plan to the Authority that details how recommendations will be addressed, and within what timescale. A template for this response will be made available on the Authority's website. Where the Authority believes that a Church body has not demonstrated reasonable and timely progress in implementing audit recommendations or addressing inspection findings, it will take enforcement action in accordance with its statutory powers (discussed in the next section).

Supporting functions

- 2.23. In addition to its core functions the Authority will need a range of supporting functions, enabling the organisation to operate

effectively. These will include core corporate services—such as finance, legal support, human resources, digital services and information governance, which may either be delivered in-house or externally. The Authority will also include contract management, project management, secretariat and administrative functions, as well as a corporate communications function. The Authority will adopt complaints and whistleblowing policies as appropriate.

2.24. Through its National Safeguarding Team, the Archbishops' Council currently manages several major safeguarding-related contracts. These include contracts for the Church of England Redress Scheme and for Safe Spaces England and Wales. It is proposed that, subject to trustee agreement, these contracts will continue to be held by the Archbishops' Council and will not transfer to the Authority. Further analysis is being undertaken to develop proposals for other relevant contracts.

Notes

1. A list of people who are currently required to comply with Safeguarding Codes of Practice can be found in section 5A of the [Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016](#).

SECTION 3: CLARITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

3. Clarity and accountability

3.1. We want the Authority to have the powers it needs to shape the wider safeguarding system across the Church of England. Over time, we want to build a culture where everyone's safeguarding responsibilities are clear and where leaders and organisations are truly accountable for their safeguarding performance. We want good safeguarding practice to be embedded in the culture of the Church of England, and to move away from a climate of anxiety and uncertainty to one of confidence and clarity.

- 3.2. To shape this culture, the Authority must have legal powers, and Church bodies must have clear duties. These duties will sit alongside and reinforce existing legislation and guidance (e.g., [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#), [Safeguarding and Protecting People for Charities and Trustees](#)).

Duties of Church bodies

- 3.3. Church bodies must comply with reasonable requests for information and assistance from the Authority. The Authority will establish appropriate data sharing arrangements to enable this. For example:
- If the Authority is responding to a safeguarding concern or allegation involving a senior clergy person, it may seek relevant information or case files from a diocesan body to support risk assessment, or ask relevant people to attend case management meetings.
 - The Authority will expect safeguarding officers to participate in regular professional supervision and quality assurance activities.
 - The Authority will seek agreement from diocesan and cathedral bodies for appropriately anonymised information about safeguarding cases to be automatically shared through digital systems (e.g., a casework management system).
- 3.4. Church bodies must participate in the Authority's audit programme and enable the Authority to perform an emergency inspection when required. For example:
- Diocesan Boards of Finance, bishops' offices and cathedrals must fully participate in the programme of scheduled audits. This might involve arranging for auditors to interview nominated people, submitting information to auditors in advance of the audit visit, promoting surveys to parishioners, and providing private working space for auditors to use during an on-site visit.
 - When required, Diocesan Boards of Finance, bishops' offices, cathedrals, Parochial Church Councils and incumbents must enable an emergency inspection to take place immediately. This might involve providing inspectors with prompt access to the information they require, allowing inspectors to interview key people, and providing private working space for inspectors to use during an on-site visit.

- 3.5. Church bodies must respond to audit and inspection findings within the timeframe specified in the Authority's report. They must produce an action plan and submit it to the Authority, explaining what actions they will take to implement the Authority's recommendation and provide the Authority with regular updates on progress. Where a Church body does not intend to implement a recommendation, it must clearly explain its decision and the reasons for it in its action plan.
- 3.6. Relevant persons must comply with mandatory safeguarding Codes of Practice issued by the Authority, or face disciplinary action.
- 3.7. Church bodies must ensure that people appointed to fulfil the role of Diocesan or Cathedral Safeguarding Officer meet the professional standards the Authority has defined for the role, including through their skills and behaviours.

Powers of the Authority

- 3.8. We are proposing that the Authority will possess statutory enforcement powers, enabling it to take action to improve safeguarding practice in Church bodies. Proposals for how these powers could be structured are provided below.
- 3.9. Where a Church body fails to perform any required safeguarding duty, the Authority may issue a warning notice. This notice will describe the nature of the breach and will specify the actions which the Authority expects the Church body to take and the deadline for action.
- 3.10. Where a Church body commits a serious breach of its duties, or fails to adequately respond to a warning notice, the Authority may issue a compliance notice. This notice will describe the nature of the breach, specify the actions which the Authority expects the Church body to take, and state the timeframe for compliance. Compliance notices will be published in full to ensure accountability. Where a compliance notice has been issued, the Authority will require a Church body to produce an improvement plan within thirty days, and thereafter to report regularly to the Authority on progress. The Authority may require Church bodies to attend meetings where progress will be reviewed.

- 3.11. Church bodies may appeal against enforcement decisions through a process overseen by the Chief Safeguarding Officer.
- 3.12. Where the Authority believes that a disciplinary offence has been committed by a relevant person, it may initiate proceedings under the appropriate disciplinary process or formally request that the relevant disciplinary authority do so. Disciplinary processes may result in suspension, removal from office, prohibition from ministry, or another penalty.
- 3.13. Where the Authority has serious concerns about safeguarding in a Church charity, it will raise the concerns with the Charity Commission.
- 3.14. Where the Authority believes a criminal offence has been committed, it will have a duty to refer the matter to the police or other appropriate statutory authority.

Interim measures

- 3.15. In the period before legislation is made, the Authority will invite Church bodies to voluntarily enter into an agreement establishing equivalent duties (for Church bodies) and equivalent powers (for the Authority) on an interim basis. A register of those Church bodies which have entered into voluntary agreements with the Authority will be published on its website—providing clarity about which Church bodies have aligned their safeguarding activity with the Authority's standards.

Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to tell us what you think about the proposed new Authority design. Your contributions to this exercise are hugely appreciated.

The programme team will collate and analyse all responses, working with the Programme Board to revise and refine the new Authority design before reporting back to the General Synod and the Archbishops' Council.

If you have any questions in the meantime, please email the programme team at safestructures@churchofengland.org and if you would like to receive occasional updates from the independent Executive Chair, Dame Christine Ryan, and the programme team, please [sign up for the Safeguarding Structures Reform newsletter](#).

Thank you,

The Safeguarding Structures Reform Programme