

The University Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford.

Statement from the Parochial Church Council regarding the future of Safeguarding Oversight in the Church of England following the vote at General Synod on 11.2.25.

April 2025

The PCC acknowledges the recent decision of the General Synod to adopt a more cautious approach to the restructuring of safeguarding oversight within the Church of England. Whilst it recognises the complexities involved, the PCC is concerned that the chosen pathway delays necessary reform and sustains existing perceptions of an institutional reluctance to address safeguarding failures decisively.

Commitment to Safeguarding Reform

The PCC affirms its commitment to ensuring that safeguarding in the Church of England is conducted with transparency, accountability, and independence. In particular, it recognises the importance of addressing historical safeguarding failures with a survivor-centred approach, ensuring their voices shape future decisions. It supports the ambition for 'greater independence' in safeguarding although believes that further clarity is required on how this will be practically implemented.

Concerns About General Synod's Approach

While the PCC acknowledges the legal and organisational challenges involved in moving towards full safeguarding independence, it notes the following concerns:

- The decision to endorse Model 3 over Model 4 represents a delay in implementing a stronger, more independent structure.
- There remains uncertainty over the relationship between safeguarding investigations and the Clergy Disciplinary Measure, which requires further clarification.
- The continued delay risks undermining trust in the Church's commitment to safeguarding reform, both internally and externally.

Call to Action

We urge Church leadership to:

1. **Centre the experience of victims and survivors in decision-making** – ensuring that safeguarding reform prioritises their needs, experiences, and well-being.
2. **Clearly define 'greater independence'** – ensuring that safeguarding decisions are not unduly influenced by Church hierarchy.
3. **Expedite progression to Model 4** – identifying the legal and practical steps necessary to implement a fully independent safeguarding structure.

The PCC is committed to working collaboratively to advance safeguarding reforms that reflect the Church's responsibility to protect the vulnerable and rebuild trust.