

A Letter from Bishop Patrick for Safeguarding Sunday 2026

This February we held in Nottingham our annual Diocesan Safeguarding networking event. This is always an important opportunity for Parish Safeguarding Representatives to gather together, to discuss good practice, and to receive some input from the Diocesan Director of Safeguarding and some words of gratitude and encouragement from myself. They do a great job! It also provides some very useful feedback on how we can continue to improve our Safeguarding service and the support that is given to parishes and chaplaincies. Good two-way communication is always important in helping us to embed quality Safeguarding practice so that all our parishes and chaplaincies are safe and welcoming places. Our diocesan website has details of all our Safeguarding information and the excellent support that continues to be offered.

On Tuesday last, we celebrated across the diocese the 'Day of special prayer for victims and survivors of sexual abuse'. In my homily during the Cathedral Mass I spoke of how, from meeting with and listening to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, I have come to understand that sexual abuse not only heinously violates a child at the time of their abuse but it all too often cruelly robs a child of their future. Victims and survivors of sexual abuse continue to carry throughout their lives the traumatic and life-long consequences of the grave crime of sexual abuse, and I am more aware of how it also affects their families and parish communities. Please know that my door and that of our Safeguarding team is always open to anyone affected by abuse.

Please join me in continuing to do everything we each can to learn the lessons from the past and to protect and keep safe the most vulnerable in all our communities. As I continue to say, this is surely part and parcel of the DNA of every Christian, an essential characteristic of our identity as Christ's followers, that we respect, protect and treat each other with care. It therefore needs all of us to be engaged in this way of thinking and acting if we are to continue to embed a culture of Safeguarding throughout our diocese.

The theme of this year's diocesan Safeguarding Sunday is: action speaks louder. Everyone is being encouraged to fill out an Action Pledge Card at Mass in which they commit to completing a specific action that will help create a safer place. For example, they may decide to commit to praying once a week for our diocesan Safeguarding team and for their parish Safeguarding Representative, or to complete their Safeguarding training or to become better informed.

This is so important because, whatever you decide to do, Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Thank you for all that you each already do and for what you will pledge to do.

With my prayers and gratitude,

+Patrick McKinney