



Safeguarding Leadership Pathway Participant Handbook

January 2025

1. Introduction

This pathway supports the vision set out in the national Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework, which ensures that all Church officers¹ develop their skills and knowledge in safeguarding to an appropriate level. As a Church we recognise the importance leaders play in creating and maintaining a safe environment for all, in whatever way they support the work of the Church. It is essential that we understand safeguarding as a theological imperative, rooted in the nature and love of God and demonstrated in behaviours that give equal value to all.

¹ A 'Church officer' is anyone appointed/elected by or on behalf of the Church to a post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid.

The Church has committed to developing a set of National Safeguarding Standards as part of a quality assurance framework. The framework currently under development will be a mechanism for:

- Asking the question “How well are we doing this and what difference is it making?”
- Analysing the answers to this question to develop organisational safeguarding expertise.
- Using that learned expertise to drive systematic change and continuous improvement in both the quality and impact of each activity, as our understanding of the nature of Church-based abuse evolves.

This learning pathway has been built around these National Safeguarding Standards²:

National Safeguarding Standards

<p>Standard 1</p>	<p>PREVENTION Church Bodies have in place a planned range of measures which together are effective in preventing abuse in their context.</p>
<p>Standard 2</p>	<p>CULTURE, LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY Church bodies have the safe and healthy culture, effective leadership, resourcing and scrutiny arrangements necessary to deliver high quality safeguarding practices and outcomes.</p>
<p>Standard 3</p>	<p>RECOGNISING, ASSESSING AND MANAGING RISK Risk assessments, Safeguarding Agreements and associated processes are of a high standard and result in positive outcomes. The assessment and management of risk is underpinned by effective partnership working.</p>
<p>Standard 4</p>	<p>VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS Victims and survivors experience the timeliness and quality of Church bodies' responses to disclosures, and their subsequent support, as positively helping the healing process and meeting their needs.</p>
<p>Standard 5</p>	<p>LEARNING, SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT All those engaged in safeguarding related activity in Church bodies receive the type and level of learning, professional development, support and supervision necessary to respond to safeguarding situations, victims and survivors, and respondents, effectively.</p>

² The exact wording of the Church's safeguarding standards is still draft, awaiting approval by the National Safeguarding Steering Group in May 2023, but the five standard areas will be the same.

2. Learning Outcomes of this pathway

We hope that participants will reflect deeply on their own values and beliefs and integrate these with the values and beliefs underpinning good safeguarding practice. The idea is that good practice will then flow from an inner motivation, rather than be experienced as an external process to be followed because it is required.

By the end of this pathway participants will:

- Understand how safeguarding issues and abuse can be prevented in their context.
- Understand how healthy culture and safe, effective leadership shape Christian communities that are healthy, safe and have the capacity to deliver high quality safeguarding practices.
- Recognise when risk assessment and management processes are required, understanding when, why and how they must be used.
- Better understand the impact that abuse and trauma have on individuals' lives, relationships and interactions in a community setting, leading to better responses to victims and survivors.
- Evaluate their learning and translate this into an individual plan of action that will improve their safeguarding practice and responses.

3. Structure of this pathway

This pathway aims to encourage a process of reflective learning through individual tasks and group work, consisting of two sessions with an evaluation task to be undertaken after session two. The course reflects our National Safeguarding Standards, creating dedicated space to explore our culture, values, beliefs and safeguarding responses within the Church.

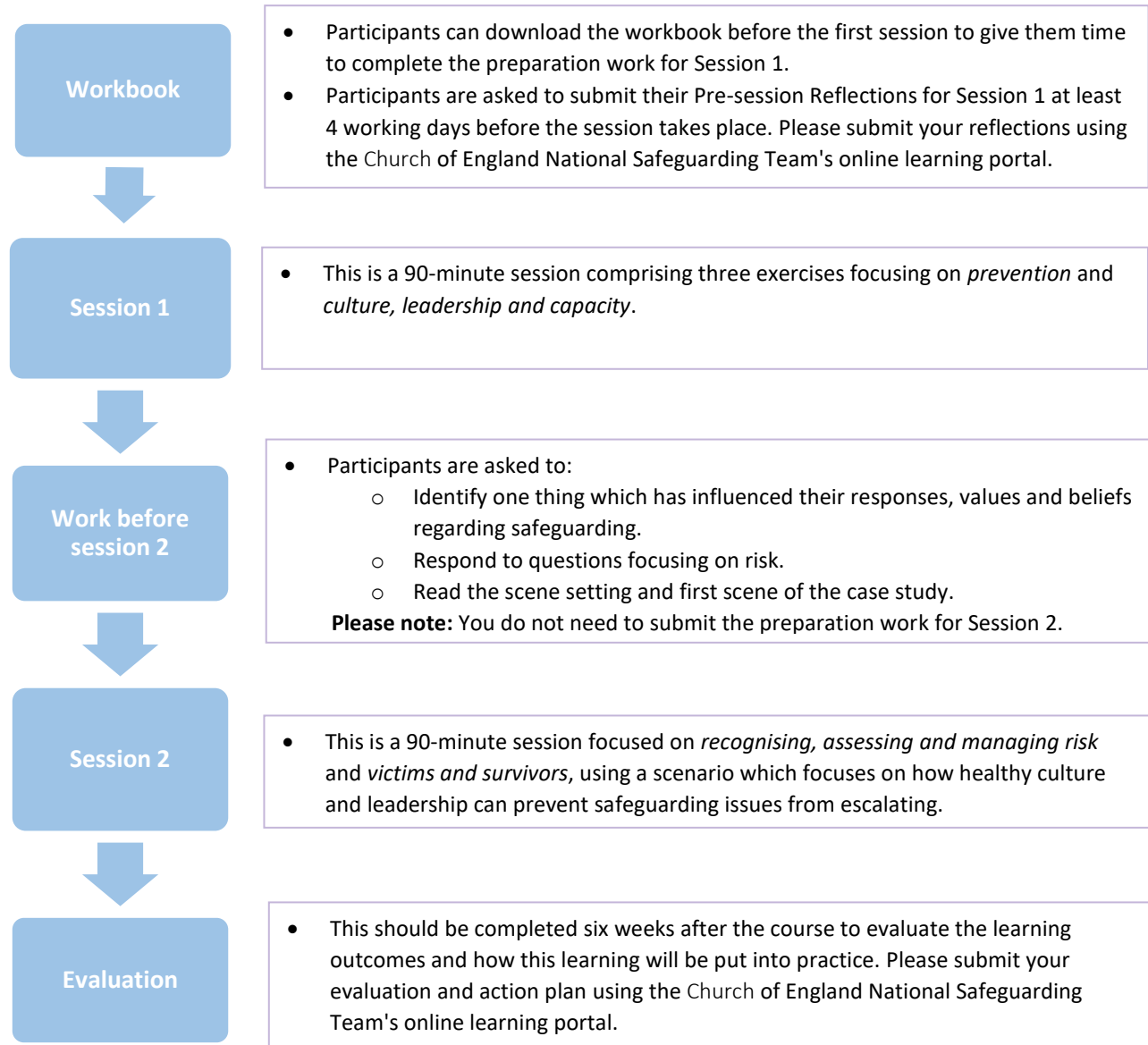
- **The focus of the first session** is on standards one and two – ***prevention and culture, leadership, and capacity***. Creating environments in which everyone is safe and can flourish is fundamental to our purpose as God's Church. Building safer, healthier cultures is all about modelling attitudes and behaviours to those around us to achieve this purpose. To create safer places effectively, we must be prepared to look at our cultures – do they support this mission and vision? How do we know that we are both safe and healthy?
- **The focus of the second session** is on standards three and four – ***recognising, assessing, and managing risk and victims and survivors***. In exploring how to respond effectively to safeguarding concerns and the people involved in them the aim is to get beyond mere consideration of process. This session builds on discussions around the importance of healthy culture, leadership and capacity as the foundation of good safeguarding practices and the role that they play in prevention.
- The focus of the evaluation task is on standard five – ***learning, supervision and support***.

In addition to the evaluation task at the end of the course, there is preparation work to be completed before each session. You must complete all elements of the pathway to be issued a certificate of completion. Please note that if you are new to your role or parish we'll need to confirm that you have completed the Basic Awareness and Foundation level modules.

4. Preparation work

Course Outline

You are invited to undertake the preparation tasks at your convenience, but please ensure these are completed prior to the session for which they are assigned.



Session 1

Session one deals with **prevention** and **culture, leadership and capacity**. This session will draw on reflections from your preparation work and your own experiences of healthy cultures, as we focus on creating environments in which everyone is safe and can flourish.

Preparation for the Session

1. Reflect on each of the six aspects of healthy cultures depicted on the Culture Conversation Cube.



2. Complete a written reflection in response to the following questions, using the Church of England National Safeguarding Team's online learning portal.

Question 1: Thinking about each aspect of the culture cube what attitudes, behaviours and values are present within your church or parish? Which are your areas of strength and your areas for development?

Question 2: If your church epitomised a healthy culture, what would you see, hear, feel and experience as a member?

Question 3: How could your church, its culture and the way it is experienced contribute to the prevention of safeguarding issues?

Please submit your reflection **no later than four working days before Session 1**, so that the facilitators can prepare for the discussion that forms the basis of the session. If you do not submit your answers by the deadline or if your answers indicate that no real thought and reflection have taken place, we will ask you to review your submission before inviting you to join the rest of the pathway.

You may find the **Tips for a safer, healthier culture** helpful when thinking about these questions (you'll also find the tips on pp. 10-12 below): <https://thirtyoneeight.org/blogs/7-tips-for-a-safer-healthier-culture/>

The Code of Safer Working Practice and the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of Clergy may assist in your responses regarding the 'model safe behaviours' aspect.

The Code of Safer Working Practice:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/code-of-safer-working-practice-02.07.2021.pdf> or see Page 13 of the Handbook.

The Guidelines for Professional Conduct of the Clergy:

[The Guidelines | The Church of England](#)



3. Watch and/or read the resources on the Social GRRRAAAACCEEESSSS's; the paper is provided below on pg. 15-22, with a short video presentation available on the Safeguarding training Portal: [Social GRRRAAAACCEEESSSS Video](#)

When exploring these resources, you might want to consider the following questions:

- What factors from a person's own life experiences, history and characteristics could have an impact on their beliefs, values and emotions?
- How does this affect the way we respond to others?
- How does this affect how we are perceived by others?

Session 2

Session 2 deals with **recognising, assessing and managing risk** and **victims and survivors**. It draws on the discussions from the first session around healthy culture, leadership and capacity using a scenario that demonstrates how safeguarding issues can be prevented from escalating.



Preparation for the Session

1. **Identify:** What has influenced your values and beliefs with regard to safeguarding?

Please identify one thing that reflects what has influenced your individual connection with safeguarding. This might be a piece of music or song lyrics, a passage from a book that's important to you, something connected to nature, a piece of art, a bit of scripture, or something else connected to theology or religious teachings.

We ask that you come to this session prepared to share what has influenced you and to explore how this has informed your responses, values and beliefs regarding safeguarding.

Examples:

[You are Worth More than Many Sparrows](#) (a choral piece by David Creese)

"The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members."
(*Mahatma Gandhi*)

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." (*Proverbs 31:8*)

"It takes a village to raise a child." (*African proverb*)

"'And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (*Mark 12:30-31 (ESV)*)

[Transformations](#) (a series of linocut angels by Sarah Troughton)

2. Reflect on the following questions:

Question 1: What has influenced and therefore underpins your values and beliefs regarding safeguarding?

Question 2: How confident are you in recognising and managing risk on a scale of 0 – 10 (where 0 is not at all confident and 10 is extremely confident). What supports your score?

Question 3: What safeguarding risks exist in your own context – *what are we worried about?* What challenges have you experienced in managing a known safeguarding risk? How are/should these risks be managed/mitigated – *what's working well and what more can we do?*

3. Read the case study on page 8

Case Study: While reading this consider what you would be thinking and feeling and what, if anything, you would do.

Setting:

- Place: mid-size (~15,000 people) market town in agricultural county. No other towns nearby, all villages and farms. Anytown is therefore the hub for services, shopping, education and leisure activities for a large and mostly rural surrounding area.
- Church: St Ethelburga's. Mid-size (~80 people) church in the middle of Anytown with a small number of young people in the congregation, plus a larger number of young people who 'hang around' the church but do not attend. Anytown does not have a youth club or anything similar. Several of the young 'hangers on' have said they would attend a youth group if the church ran one.

Main characters:

- Matthew: 35, Vicar. Has been at St Ethelburga's for seven years, his first incumbency. The congregation had dwindled under the previous incumbent who had been there for 25 years until retirement, but Matthew has slowly been bringing people back since he arrived. Matthew would love to run a youth group himself but does not have time with his other commitments.
- Emma (33). Emma is Matthew's wife. Emma with support from Kate runs Sunday School / Messy Church, which has been successful.
- Kate (27) came back to the church following Matthew's arrival. Kate runs a mother's and toddler's drop-in group which meets at the church on weekday mornings. Kate also runs Sunday School and Messy Church with Emma.
- Clive, 67. Retired Probation Officer. Clive is the Parish Safeguarding Officer, having been appointed soon after Matthew's arrival. Prior to Clive, the parish had not had a PSO for several years. Clive has worked closely with Matthew, Emma, Kate, and others to get the parish's safeguarding back 'on track' from where it was when he took over.
- Christopher: 29. Single. Accountant. Very friendly, open. Went to Bible college after school and has done some overseas mission work. Joined St Ethelburga's three months ago, lives out of town. Gives the impression of being 'in tune' with the young people in the church, e.g. has similar tastes in music and fashion.

Scene 1:

Christopher has been going to every service at St Ethelburga's since he arrived three months ago. He is popular, energetic and seems very devout. He has been helping at tea and coffee mornings, and has said he would love to join the worship band which plays at the 'contemporary' service once a month (he plays guitar). He has been getting to know the young people in the church, chatting with them after the service, and knows the names of some of the other young people who 'hang around' the church but do not attend services. He has also got to know the wider church and just seems very friendly and engaging with everyone.

Consolidation and Evaluation

The history and experience of evaluation in safeguarding training – across all sectors, not just the Church – is that it tends to focus on the participant’s immediate, self-reported experience of the session itself. The limitation of this is that we just do not know if such training is having any lasting impact – do people simply attend the training event, tick that box, and continue as before?

The evaluation that really matters is whether the learning experience has had more than a superficial effect on participants and their practice. The hope is that they follow the training not because it is a requirement, but because they really want to exhibit the behaviours encouraged by the training. The purpose of this evaluation, then, is to try to find out if the learning experience has had the desired impact on participants and their safeguarding practice.

The Evaluation Task

Six weeks after the second session, complete the self-reflection on how you have applied the learning from this pathway and create an action plan (3-4 items) showing how you will integrate your learning into your safeguarding practices. Your self-reflection and action plan should be submitted using the [Church of England National Safeguarding Team Online Learning Portal](#)

Please use the [Church of England National Safeguarding Team Online Learning Portal](#) to submit all work.

Please do not use Microsoft Forms to submit your safeguarding work as this is no longer monitored or in use.

Action Plan

Developing a 6–8-month action plan will allow you to put this learning to concrete use and demonstrate that safeguarding is increasingly intuitive and at the heart of everything you do.

When developing this action plan please think about how you might demonstrate the learning that you’ve gained which will allow you to meet the following learning outcomes:

- Reflect on how safeguarding issues and abuse can be prevented within your context.
- Consider how healthy culture and safe, effective leadership shape Christian communities that are healthy, safe and have the capacity to deliver high quality safeguarding practices.
- Recognise when risk assessment and management processes are required, understanding when, why and how they must be used.
- Better understand the impact that abuse and trauma have on individuals’ lives, relationships and interactions in a community setting, leading to better responses to victims and survivors.

When creating your action plan think “SMART”



We would suggest that you develop 3-4 objectives for the next 6-8 months.

We also suggest that you to discuss your action plan with colleagues who might be able to support or contribute to the plan.

Here is an example objective:

Objective: What would you like to achieve/implement?	Task/s: What do you need to do?	Success criteria: What will it look like if you achieve your objective?	Timescale: When would you like to achieve this?
Create an environment in which Safeguarding is not feared but spoken about openly, beyond process and policy.	Safeguarding is discussed at PCC beyond reporting.	These discussions are not a tick box exercise but an open dialogue, in which we can explore how to create a safe space.	6 months

Further information, resources and websites

Tips for a safer, healthier culture

Culture is the all-important ingredient in the success of any organisation or community. Strategy is important – in fact it is essential - we have to know where we are going and how we are going to get there, but knowing how we are going to get there is as much about our culture as it is the plans and dreams for our work or ministry. The need to focus on culture and get that right, in whatever setting we are working in is critical to the success of achieving our goals. So, culture and strategy go hand in hand, but good strategy without good culture will never achieve its fullest potential.

Creating environments in which everyone is safe and can flourish is fundamental to our purpose as God’s Church. Building safer, healthier culture is all about modelling attitudes and behaviours to those around us to achieve this purpose. To effectively create safer places, we must be prepared to take a long cold look at our cultures – do they support this mission and vision? How do we know that we are both safe and healthy?

What are the characteristics of safer, healthier Christian culture?

It is important that we consider this. Safe and healthy culture doesn’t happen by mistake. We have to work at it. We can’t just assume that we all know the answer to this question, like the child in Sunday School who worked out that the answer to every question was Jesus.

If we want to see our culture having a positive effect on those we work with or minister to, we must start with ourselves; our attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. Sometimes this means we will need to be the change we want to see around us and help others to see what we see.

Safer, healthier culture means:

- We have the principles of safeguarding as the foundation of our efforts.
- We respect, value and nurture those in our care.
- We empower and guide through appropriate use of scripture.
- We nurture our leaders at all levels.

More resources

Would you make me feel safe?



Click here 

Safer, healthier culture also means that:

- We value whole-life service, not just what happens in church.
- We operate with a healthy regard for accountability (for ourselves and others).
- We model inclusion and participation.
- We guide in a manner that maintains freedom of choice.

More resources

Would you respect my choices?



Click here 

So, how do we ensure that a focus on these things stands a chance of making a difference? Here are seven top tips to help us map our culture against our aim of creating the safer places that incorporate the points above:

1. Listen to the stories and commentary

Pay attention and genuinely listen to what is being said about your church or organisation, both by those inside and those outside. How do people think you have managed challenging issues? Can you demonstrate that you are prepared to learn lessons from what didn't go well?

More resources

Would you encourage me to use my voice?



Click here 

2. Be proactive in your communications and messaging

Make every effort to be clear in your intention to facilitate and foster safer practices. Ensure that people know who your key contacts are and that your welcome comments and concerns being shared appropriately. Reinforcing positive messages about safer places within services will help too.

3. Manage power dynamics

Be attentive to how power is used within your church organization, by who and for what purpose. Is any exercise of power coupled to appropriate accountability? Make every effort to ensure that power is used in a way that empowers others – to be most effective, it should be given away.

More resources

Would you show me that I can trust you?



Click here 

4. Be transparent about your structures and accountability mechanisms

Be alert to the formal and informal structures and accountabilities that exist in your church or organisation – it will make all the difference to the long-term sustainability of your culture-setting efforts. Ensure that shadow structures (i.e. informal and often unrecognised) don't undermine your efforts and reduce accountability.

5. Be clear about governance and leadership

Make sure you are clear about how your church or organisation is governed. Would people know who to speak to and know the difference between organisational governance and spiritual leadership? Ensure you give the maintenance of your culture sufficient attention alongside the pursuit of mission and vision.

6. Foster good customs and practices

Encourage and model the day-to-day behaviours and ways of working that you want to see in your church or organisation. Welcome appropriate and respectful challenge to behaviours and attitudes that threaten or conflict with safer, healthier culture.

7. Review and Refresh

Keeping issues of safer, healthier culture on the agenda so that it becomes expected as the norm will encourage growth and flourishing. Reviewing the impact of all the above will help you to make changes in a timely way and allow you to deal with low level concerns before they get too big.

Despite our best intentions and the best strategic planning, our work and ministry will be limited in its ability to foster flourishing unless we can demonstrate that it is founded on and characterised by a well-informed culture – one that is safe and healthy.

This material is based upon the book *Escaping the maze of spiritual abuse: Creating healthy Christian cultures* by Lisa Oakley & Justin Humphreys, SPCK, 2019.

THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

The Code of Safer Working Practice

The Code of Safer Working Practice expresses our commitment to demonstrating God's love by placing the highest priority on the safety of those to whom we minister. It sets out what we expect from anyone who ministers in our church, in both paid or voluntary roles, and is one of the ways we ensure high standards of safeguarding in all we do.

Upholding the Code

All members of staff and volunteers are expected to report any breaches of this code to the Parish Safeguarding Officer. Staff and volunteers who breach this code may be subject to disciplinary procedures or asked to leave their role. Serious breaches may also result in a referral made to the relevant statutory agency.

All those working on behalf of the parish with children, young people and adults must:

- Treat all individuals with respect and dignity;
- Respect people's rights to personal privacy;
- Ensure that their own language, tone of voice and body language are respectful;
- Ensure that children, young people and adults know who they can talk to about a personal concern;
- Record and report any concerns about a child, young person or adult and/or the behaviour of another worker with their activity leader and/or the Parish Safeguarding Officer. All written records should be signed and dated;
- Obtain written consent for any photographs or videos to be taken, shown, displayed or stored.

In addition, those working with children and young people must:

- Always aim to work with or within sight of another adult;
- Ensure another adult is informed if a child needs to be taken to the toilet;
- Respond warmly to a child who needs comforting but make sure there are other adults around;
- Ensure that the child and parents are aware of any activity that requires physical contact and of its nature before the activity takes place.

All those working on behalf of the parish with children, young people and adults must not:

- Use any form of physical punishment;
- Be sexually suggestive about or to an individual;
- Scapegoat, ridicule or reject an individual or group;
- Permit abusive peer activities e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying;
- Show favouritism to any one individual or group;
- Allow an individual to involve them in excessive attention seeking;
- Allow unknown adults access to children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable. Visitors should always be accompanied by an approved person;
- Allow strangers to give lifts to children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable in the group;
- Befriend children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable on social media;
- Take photographs on personal phones or cameras as this means that images are stored on personal devices.

In addition, for children and young people, must not:

- Give lifts to children you are supervising, on their own or your own (unless there are exceptional circumstances e.g. in an emergency for medical reasons or where parents fail to collect a child and no other arrangements can be made to take a child home. In such situations, the circumstances and your decision must be recorded and shared with an appropriate person at the earliest opportunity);
- Smoke or drink alcohol in the presence of children and young people, except when this is a social situation with family members/carers present, eg a parish party¹
- Arrange social occasions with children and young people (other than events which also include family members/carers) outside organised group occasions.

Acceptable Touch

Sympathetic attention, encouragement and appropriate physical contact are needed by children and adults. Some physical contact with children, particularly younger children, can be wholly appropriate. However, abusers can use touch that appears safe to 'normalise' physical contact which then becomes abusive. As a general rule, the use of touch between adults in positions of responsibility and those with whom they are working or volunteering should be initiated by the person themselves, and kept to the minimum. In addition to this, always follow the guidelines below:

- Ask permission before you touch someone;
- Allow the other person to determine the degree of touch except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. when they need medical attention);
- Avoid any physical contact that is or could be construed as sexual, abusive or offensive;

¹ For the avoidance of doubt this document does not apply to church services, including Holy Communion.

- Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors;
- Touch should be in response to a person's needs and not related to the worker's needs. Touch should be age appropriate, welcome and generally initiated by the child, not the worker.

Social GRRRAACCEEESSS and Safeguarding

Clarification of terms

This paper introduces readers to the concept of the Social GRRRAACCEEESSS. This is an important concept used in modern safeguarding practice. The term is “A mnemonic that separates out different aspects of identity into separate categories” (Butler, 2017, p. 17). Discussions around this mnemonic are situated within something called systemic practice, which is a way of viewing the world that focuses on how people relate to each other.³ Its foundations are in social work, counselling and psychotherapy. The term “Social GRRRAACCEEESSS” and its use are not related to the Christian term “Grace” and its theological meaning, the unconditional and unearned love of God.

1. Introduction

The Social GRRRAACCEEESSS framework is a tool for thinking about identity. As individuals, we are a sum of parts – visible and invisible characteristics that in the right contexts afford us power and privilege. This tool allows us to examine the characteristics that might have an impact on our behaviour, inviting us to be aware of how our identity influences the ways in which we relate to others.

Originally the mnemonic used was “disgraces” to highlight the fact that such inequalities are disgraceful. Over time the “dis” was replaced with the word “Social” to ensure that aspects of identity are not merely seen on an individual level, but within a social context. The construction of the Social GRRRAACCEEESSS as a framework developed out of the work of John Burnham and Alison Roper-Hall.⁴ Their aim was to ensure that practitioners in fields like psychotherapy and counselling are aware of their own preconceptions in working with others.

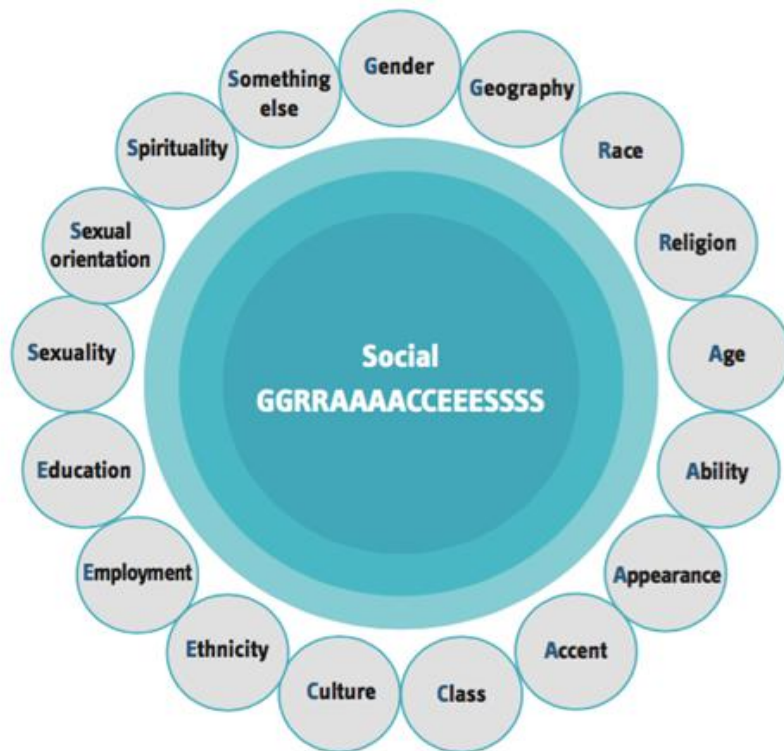
2. What are the Social GRRRAACCEEESSS?

The mnemonic represents aspects of social difference. This list is not exhaustive, but it provides a starting point for thinking about the way in which these characteristics influence how we view the world.

³ Systemic practice, is a way of acting, thinking and viewing the world, which focuses on relationships and recognises that individuals are always embedded in their social context.

⁴ Burnham, J. (2012) Developments in social GRRRAACCEEESSS: Visible-invisible and voiced-unvoiced. In I-B. Krause (Ed.) *Culture and Reflexivity in Systemic Psychotherapy*. Mutual Perspectives. London: Karnac.

In the diagram below, the SGs are in interlinking circles so as to draw attention to the fact that these aspects of



identity interact with each other.

Reflection:

Which Social GRRRAAACCEESSSS grab you most and why?

If someone was to describe you using the SGs, what do you think this description would be?

3. How do the Social GRRRAAACCEESSSS inform safeguarding responses?

When working in a safeguarding context it is important that we are aware of how we might be perceived by others and, equally, how we ourselves perceive others. Survivors from a range of contexts all too often say that they feel they are seen not as individuals but as part of a homogeneous group. The SGs ensure we pay attention to both visible and invisible characteristics that shape our experiences of the world. They help us look beyond the surface and remember that *“there is more to me than meets the eye”*.

How use of the SG framework might have a positive impact on our safeguarding responses:

- It encourages us to explore our own privilege.
- It encourages us to reflect on our own and others’ characteristics and how these may influence our decisions and the assumptions we and others make.

More resources

Would you value who I am right now?

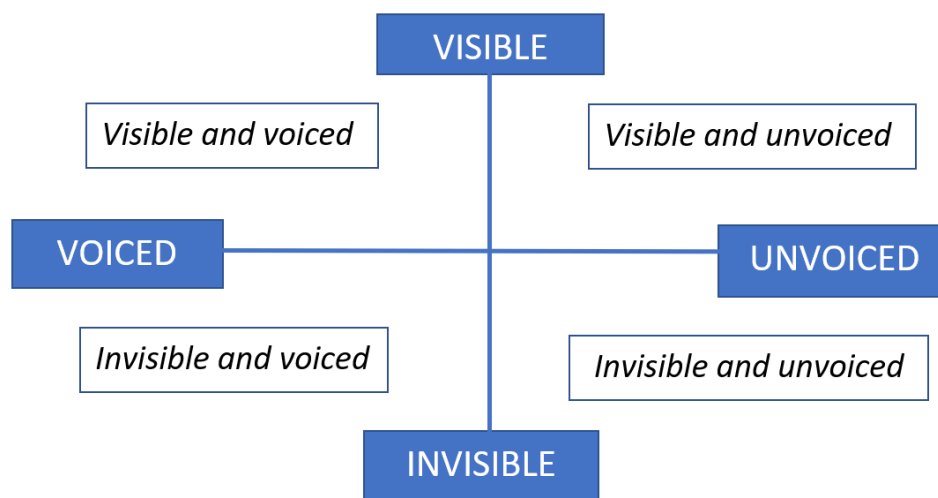


Click here 

4. Visible, voiced, invisible and unvoiced?

When thinking about how the SGs interact with each other, it might help to think of a kaleidoscope. Images move back and forward, getting larger and smaller, and blurring into each other. The same can be said for the SGs: a “collidescope” of aspects of self (and others) that expand, contract and collide, temporarily move forward, or fade away within different contexts.

The nature of SGs means that identity is not static. In different contexts, certain aspects of identity will either be voiced or unvoiced, visible or invisible. SGs are dynamic, sometimes colliding together and always in relationships with each other (Burnham, 2013). The diagram below provides a representation of this: SGs may move between the quadrants as a person moves from one context to another.



“There is more to me than meets the eye”: the “invisible or unvoiced” SGs.

Example-

A white, middle-class professional male will be afforded privilege due to his class, gender and professional role. This male will be perceived by society as holding privilege. However, invisible SGs, such as sexual orientation, may remain unvoiced, because in some circumstances it would result in oppression. In some situations, sexual orientation, homosexuality in this case, may be an **invisible-voiced** SG. However, in other social circumstances, due to under-representation and oppression, this may be **invisible and unvoiced**.

Example-

A female Afghan refugee, settled in a predominantly white, middle-class, rural village, with conversational English will be underrepresented. She might feel oppressed due to culture, gender, geography, ability and religion. All of which will be **visible** or **voiced** within social situations. However, the **invisible-unvoiced** SG of education, a medical degree in this case, would - if voiced - afford privilege.

Engaging in conversation that brings out unvoiced and invisible SGs allows us to explore who we are beyond the visible and obvious aspects of our identity.

5. Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the idea that the multiple parts of our identity (race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, etc.) can never be understood in isolation. Identity will always be made up of the overlap, or intersections, of these various aspects of identity. In other words, each SG on its own does not tell the whole story of an individual's experience of power or oppression. It's important to consider the combination of a person's characteristics and how they are interwoven in that person's experience.

Example-

A physically disabled white man will be rewarded the privileges of patriarchy and whiteness, while discriminated against for being a wheelchair user. His age, sexual orientation and class will bring additional axes of privilege and oppression into the mix. These intersections result in a unique lived experience that can only be understood by holding these identities together.

What are your invisible SGs and are there times these become voiced?

Do you feel there are any SGs missing?

6. What does this all mean?

SGs are socially constructed. Within different contexts certain aspects of identity will afford you power or privilege; whereas within other contexts they may lead to oppression.

SGs as a concept will not eliminate power or privilege, but the framework can help us develop an awareness of social difference and how it affords power and privilege to some.

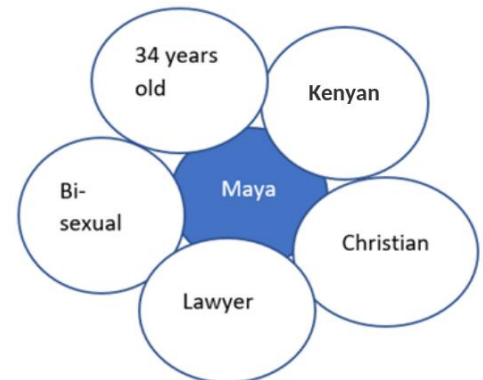
Example

I was first introduced to the SGs through a "line of privilege exercise", used to explore how aspects of identity afforded power and privilege. I recall feeling uncomfortable as either I or a colleague stepped forward, but this exercise brought to the forefront the extent to which the SGs help us identify power imbalances.

This is a daisy model, with self-placed in the centre and the SGs with which the individual aligns most depicted as petals:

Sexual orientation Age Education

Religion/Culture



These SGs will influence how Maya is perceived and how Maya perceives others. Maya moved to London to undertake her degree. Maya was fortunate in Kenya due to her father’s political standing. When returning to Kenya Maya is afforded privilege due to her education, professional role and class. However, her sexual orientation is unvoiced, due to the oppression she perceives she would encounter. By contrast, in London Maya’s sexual orientation is voiced, and she is afforded privilege and power within the LGBTQ community where she uses her professional role to address inequality.

The way we think about the world is tied up with the position and power we have, and this will be fluid and change in different contexts.

7. Presumption, Bias, and Preconceived Perceptions

SGs and our lived experiences will influence our own outlook and relationships both professionally and socially. SGs allow us to explore how we make sense of the world and our place in it and the impact this has on our relationships and decision making. This means that SGs allow us to challenge ourselves and reflect on our biases and our presumptions about others. The word “bias” tends to have negative connotations, but bias is only a bad thing when we are not aware of it and how it influences our behaviour.

It is important to look out for the following types of unconscious bias⁵ in the behaviour of ourselves and others. Noticing them and acknowledging that they might be present can help us to minimise their negative effect on the choices we make.

Stereotyping bias: A fixed notion or belief that many people share about a certain type of person or thing.

Gender bias: A preference for one gender over the other. This can change depending on the choice we’re making.

Conformity bias: When we behave similarly to others in a group, even if it goes against what we actually believe.

Beauty bias: The view that the most attractive person will be the most successful.

Affinity bias: When we warm up to someone with whom we feel a connection, e.g. attending the same college or growing up in the same town.

Halo effect: When we let one good thing about someone influence our judgement of them as a whole.

⁵This material has been adapted from content made available by the Methodist Church.

Horns effect: When we let one negative thing about someone influence our judgement of them as a whole.

Similarity bias: The natural tendency to surround ourselves with people who are similar to us.

Contrast effect: When we compare someone to the person they're replacing, rather than considering how capable they are at the job they are doing. This can happen a lot in the recruitment and selection process.

Attribution bias: When we look for the causes of our own and others' successes and failures. We tend to attribute the successes of others to luck and their failures to their personality or bad behaviour. On the other hand, we tend to attribute our own failures to other people or outside influences.

Confirmation bias: When we look for evidence to back up what we already believe and/or find it difficult to trust evidence that goes against our beliefs.

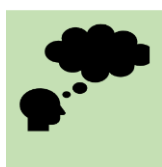
Example-

"When you look at me who do you see?"

"I see all the previous social workers who have let me down, who have not supported me and want to take my children away".

The answer to the question, "when you look at me who do you see?" will be guided by the respondent's presumptions and perceptions. There will be instances when we are "seen" according to an overriding aspect of our identity, such as employment, culture or gender. This can lead to us being homogeneously grouped, "tarred with the same brush" as others due to the lived experiences of others.

What does this mean? We need to be aware not only of **how we are viewed** due to SGs and the power they may afford us, but also **how we might view others**. We may be drawn to individuals whose visible and voiced SGs make them appear similar to us.



Pause to think:

*When entering a professional or social situation who are you drawn to?
When entering a room full of people, you don't know, who are you drawn to?
Why are you drawn to these individuals?*

Reflection:

Using the daisy model and the SGs which you are most drawn to, which of these either affords you privilege or puts you at a disadvantage?

- Within your professional role.
- Within your social context.

Do you dare ask yourself...?

- Have you ever been overlooked for a promotion because of your gender?
- Have you ever felt too intimidated to disclose your sexual orientation to colleagues?
- Has a disability ever prevented you from contributing to the workplace?
- Have you ever been rejected from a job application solely based on your surname?

8. How does this affect our responses in safeguarding?

Power and privilege are socially constructed. What is not socially constructed is whether or not a person has caused harm to others, poses a safeguarding risk or is a victim/survivor of abuse.

Our responses to others are influenced by socially constructed power and privilege. These are often granted to individuals based on their position in society. This can have an impact on our assessment of and decision making about safeguarding.

In fields like social work professionals are often asked to reflect on the impact of SGs on their work, and how this affects their interactions with and responses to those for whom they care.

Reflection:

Which SGs do you privilege in yourself and others?

Has there been a time when SGs have affected your confidence to challenge or hold another to account?

- What happened in this situation?
- What were your emotional responses?
- Did you overcome this, and if so, how?

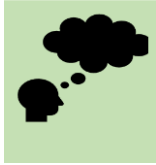
Do power and privilege affect our ability to hold others to account in the Church?

Can you think of a situation where your response to someone has been influenced by your perception of their lack of power and privilege, and which you now question?

Example-

Two families are in the process of being assessed due to concerns regarding parental alcohol misuse.

The first family is upper-middle class, residing in an affluent area. Both parents work in the legal profession and they are able to send both children to a prestigious private school. The second family resides in a deprived area. Neither parent is employed, with both in receipt of Universal Credit and the children receiving free school meals.



Pause to think:

Which SGs afford these families privilege or put them at a disadvantage?

Within these practice contexts professional responses will differ due to power and privilege. Working with the first family is seen all too often as disempowering for professionals, finding their own power and privilege diminished due to that of the family, making challenge and direct discussion more difficult. Whereas those working with the second family will hold power and privilege, meaning professional challenge surrounding behaviours and risk becomes more direct. For the two families the outcome of the assessment may differ due to the imbalance of power within the relationships.

The example above highlights how SGs can affect our ability to challenge individuals in given circumstances. Understanding and reflecting on SGs allows us to explore how our responses are affected by the balance of power in our relationships. By paying attention to the factors that influence our responses to others, we can improve our decision making in relation to safeguarding.

9. Final reflections and summary

Tools like the SG framework encourage individuals to reflect, to be curious and to explore the world from different perspectives. Within the field of safeguarding, SGs afford us the opportunity to challenge oppression and privilege. Consciously reflecting on how and why we act and interact with others due to our identity and lived experiences helps us to make the best possible judgments in safeguarding situations, to get things right.

Within safeguarding we are reminded that:

- Fast unconscious thinking leads us to make assumptions; it's good to take time to pause and reflect. It's important to try to be consciously aware of what might influence our assumptions.
- The exploration of SGs allows us to reflect on what informs our attitudes, perceptions and biases, all of which will influence how we work with individuals.
- Reflecting on the aspects of the SGs that afford privilege helps us develop an awareness of power when working with others, while considering how visible SGs can lead to presumptions about invisible aspects of other people.
- Exploring SGs encourages us to check for assumptions about others. This helps us to avoid adopting homogeneous views of groups of individuals (e.g. clergy or survivors) and to have a greater understanding of the lived experiences of others as unique individuals.

More resources

Would you walk with me at my pace?



Click here 

Further reading

- Burnham, J. (2012) 'Developments in social GRRRAACCEESSS: Visible-invisible and voiced-unvoiced'. In I-B. Krause (Ed.) *Culture and Reflexivity in Systemic Psychotherapy*. Mutual Perspectives. London: Karnac.
- Butler, C. (2017). 'Intersectionality and systemic therapy', *Context*, 151, pp. 16-18.
- Totsuka, Y. (2014). 'Which aspects of social GRRRAACCEESSS grab you most? The social GRRRAACCEESSS exercise for a supervision group to promote therapists' self-reflexivity', *Journal of family Therapy*, 36, pp. 86-106

Key relevant texts

- Oakley & Humphries (2019) **Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse. Creating Healthy Christian Cultures**. SPCK Publishing. <https://spckpublishing.co.uk/escaping-the-maze-of-spiritual-abuse>
- Fife, Janet and Gilo (2019), **Letters to a Broken Church**. Ekklesia.
- Harper and Wilson (2019) **To Heal and Not to Hurt: A fresh approach to safeguarding in Church**, Darton, Longman and Todd.
- Merchant (2020), **Broken by Fear, Anchored in Hope: Faithfulness in an age of anxiety**. SPCK Publishing. <https://spckpublishing.co.uk/broken-by-fear-anchored-in-hope>
- Frankl, Viktor (2004) **Man's Search for Meaning: The classic tribute to hope from the Holocaust**, Rider.
- Atkinson (2014), **Struggling to Forgive: Moving on From Trauma**, Monarch Books.
- Atkinson (2006), **Breaking the Chains of Abuse: A Practical Guide**, Lion Books.
- Gardiner (2021), **Sex, Power, Control: Responding to Abuse in the Institutional Church**, The Lutterworth Press. www.lutterworth.com
- Honeysett (2022), **Powerful Leaders: When Church Leadership Goes Wrong and How to Prevent It**, Inter-Varsity Press. www.thegoodbook.co.uk
- Graystone (2021) **Bleeding for Jesus**, Darton, Longman and Todd. www.dartonlongmantodd.co.uk
- MacFarlane (2021) **Going Public: A survivor's journey from grief to action**, Between the Lines. [Going Public: A Survivor's Journey from Grief to Action by Julie Macfarlane - Paperback / softback – 9781771134750 \(hymnsam.co.uk\)](http://GoingPublic:A_Survivor's_Journey_from_Grief_to_Action_by_Julie_Macfarlane_-_Paperback_/softback-9781771134750(hymnsam.co.uk))
- The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, Report on The Anglican Church: [The Anglican Church: Safeguarding in the Church of England and the Church in Wales \(iicsa.org.uk\)](http://The_Anglican_Church:_Safeguarding_in_the_Church_of_England_and_the_Church_in_Wales(iicsa.org.uk))
- The National Report on Past Cases Review 2: [Past Cases Review 2 - National Report.pdf \(churchofengland.org\)](http://Past_Cases_Review_2_-_National_Report.pdf(churchofengland.org))
- The SCIE overview report: [SCIE Final overview report of the independent diocesan safeguarding audits and additional work on improving responses to survivors of abuse.pdf \(churchofengland.org\)](http://SCIE_Final_overview_report_of_the_independent_diocesan_safeguarding_audits_and_additional_work_on_improving_responses_to_survivors_of_abuse.pdf(churchofengland.org))
- The Church of England's safeguarding policies: <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/promoting-safer-church/policy-practice-guidance>

Websites

<https://www.newcastle.anglican.org/safeguarding/if-i-told-you-what-would-you-do-/> (Resources created by survivors of church-based abuse)

www.nspcc.org.uk (National Society for the prevention of cruelty to children)

www.womensaid.org.uk (Female domestic abuse charity)

www.restoredrelationships.org (Christian domestic abuse charity)

www.mankind.org.uk (Male domestic abuse charity)

www.stopitnow.org.uk (child safeguarding organization)

www.scie.org.uk (Social Care Institute for Excellence)

www.ceop.police.uk (child exploitation and online protection command)

www.wearehourglass.org (adult safeguarding charity)

www.ageuk.org.uk (adult safeguarding charity)

www.barnardos.org.uk (child protection charity)

www.theclewerinitiative.org (modern slavery charity)

www.modernslavery.co.uk (modern slavery charity)

www.macsas.org.uk (survivor advocacy charity)

<https://houseofsurvivors.org/>

<https://survivingchurch.org/>

More resources

Would you help
me find others
who understand
and can offer me
support?



Click here 

Further support

- If I Told You, What Would You Do? Peer Support Group – for anyone harmed by any form of abuse in a church/faith context. Email: peersupport@newcastle.anglican.org

Website: <https://www.newcastle.anglican.org/safeguarding/peer-support-group/>

- Safe Spaces –

Safe Spaces is for anyone who feels they have experienced church related abuse of any form in England or Wales. Safe Spaces comprises a team of trained support advocates who have undergone specialist training in supporting survivors of sexual violence and who have received additional specific training in how the churches respond to abuse cases, the way in which faith and church-related settings have been used to carry out abuse, and the issues affecting people who have had or still have, a relationship with the church. You can contact the Safe Spaces team by: -

Tel: 0300 303 1056

(Answerphone available outside of opening times)

Email: safespaces@victimsupport.org.uk

A live chat service is also available through the Safe Spaces website - [Safe Spaces England and Wales – Safe Spaces England and Wales](#)

The Safe Spaces team are available through their helpline and live chat service on:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday: 10am-6pm and Thursday: 12pm-8pm

- **NSPCC** - For adults concerned about a child **0808 800 5000**
- **ChildLine** - For children and young people on **0800 1111**
- Action on **Elder Abuse** helpline **0808 808 8141**
- 24-hour National **Domestic Violence** Helpline **0808 2000 247**
- **NAPAC** – Offer support and advice to adult survivors of childhood abuse **0808 801 0331**
- **Stop It Now** – preventing child sexual abuse **0808 1000 900**
- **Cruse** – bereavement helpline **0808 808 1677**