

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have welcomed two key appointments to the new Independent Safeguarding Board (ISB), which has been created to provide oversight of the Church of England's national safeguarding work.

Dr Maggie Atkinson, a former Children's Commissioner for England, has been appointed as Chair of the Board. She will lead the formation of the ISB and ensure there is an effective approach to the independent oversight of safeguarding in the longer term.

The Chair will provide expert recommendations to enable the Church of England to embed a proactive, preventative, safer culture, and ensure the Church is held publicly accountable for any failure to respond to the ISB's recommendations.

Jasvinder Sanghera has been appointed as the Board's Survivor Advocate. She will ensure that the experiences and views of victims and survivors are heard and embedded within the safeguarding policy and practice development frameworks.

Maggie Atkinson has completed more than 40 years' dedicated work with children, their families and communities. Born and brought up in Yorkshire, after graduating from Cambridge she taught in comprehensive schools then worked in service and practice improvement in local authorities, including as Director of Children's Services for Gateshead. She was Children's Commissioner for England 2010-2015, and now leads independent challenge and scrutiny in several localities' safeguarding partnerships. She serves on a number of charity Boards, including at UNICEF UK.

Jasvinder is the founder of the charity Karma Nirvana, and has extensive experience of working with victims and survivors of forced marriage and honour abuse. She is Chair of the Leeds Children Safeguarding Partnership.

The two appointments were made by an independent panel which will now work with the Chair to appoint a third member to the ISB whose skills and roles will complement the members already appointed.

The purpose of introducing an independent structure for the Church's safeguarding work is twofold: to ensure good safeguarding and to challenge the internal cultures of the Church of England which too often have resulted in preventing best practice.

Conscious of the need to improve the culture of safeguarding across the church, the Archbishops' Council and House of Bishops had already agreed to support the development of an independent structure to deliver professional supervision and quality assurance across its safeguarding activities. The IICSA Report gave new momentum to this decision.

Chair, Dr Maggie Atkinson said: 'I am honoured and pleased to have been appointed to establish and chair the Church of England's Independent Safeguarding Board. I look forward to starting our work, as a strong response to safeguarding concerns whether they are historical, or current. We will be a small but insightful group, from a range of backgrounds and experience. For all my adult life I have worked with and for children, young people, families and vulnerable adults. Such work holds ordinary people and their concerns at its centre.'

“The Board will focus on how the Church either protects people who work for or come into it, or falls down in its duty to do so. All who engage with the Church must be confident they will be kept safe. It follows that safeguarding must be a primary concern in everything the Church does, every day. This work is not only about really learning lessons when things have gone badly wrong and people have been hurt as a result. It is about the culture, practice and steadfastness of safeguarding as an automatic, Church-wide state of mind. The Board’s role will be to question, reflect and report on how far this culture is manifested in what the Church does for the people it serves.”

The Survivor Advocate, Jasvinder Sanghera, said: “I feel immensely privileged to be appointed the Survivor Advocate for Church of England’s, Independent Safeguarding Board. It is vital that the Board, in overseeing and assuring the soundness of the work done by the National Safeguarding Team, has the voice of survivors and victims ever present in all it does, and says.

“This role is significant to the journey of the church and I am delighted that I will be contributing to this vision, helping to make a difference to the lives of those affected by abuse, so that lessons are not only learned but embedded in practice.”

In a joint statement, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York said: “These are vitally important appointments and we are pleased to welcome them. Numerous reports in recent years have made clear the Church of England’s safeguarding failures and provided clear and urgent recommendations for how these can be addressed – including greater transparency and accountability at every level. We are deeply grateful to Maggie and Jasvinder for offering their wisdom, skills and lived experience to move us forward and provide greater oversight of the Church’s safeguarding work.”

Notes:

1. Read more about the Independent Safeguarding Board: [https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/Independence%20in%20Safeguarding\\_0.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/Independence%20in%20Safeguarding_0.pdf)

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