

FAQs: Virtual Safeguarding Leadership Learning Pathway

Dear Colleagues, following the recent House of Bishops' guidance for dioceses to introduce the Virtual Safeguarding Leadership Pathway (replacing C2), we are writing to clarify some of the issues that we know have arisen for you in your implementation. We do recognise that the Leadership Pathway does represent a new approach to safeguarding learning, made more complicated by the Covid-19 situation which prevents in-person delivery. Hopefully what we set out below will answer some of your questions and concerns, and we are keen to highlight the support that the NST can provide to you ([blue text](#)).

Areas Q&A covers on Virtual Leadership Pathway

1. Origins and rationale
2. Evidence of the impact
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4. Co-facilitator/trainers
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1. What are the origins of the Virtual Leadership Pathway, and why does it take the form that it does?

1.1 The National Safeguarding Steering Group's vision for safeguarding and safeguarding learning

The National Safeguarding Steering Group (NSSG) - chaired by Bishop Jonathan Gibbs - is the body with delegated authority from the House of Bishops to make decisions on its behalf and is responsible for the strategic direction and development of safeguarding.

At its February 2020 meeting the NSSG confirmed its vision that safeguarding should not be an add-on to what people do and needed to be much more than a collection of processes to be followed. Rather, safeguarding should be in the very DNA of the Church and the people who make up the Church; integral to its mission, theology and world-view. It was recognised that this would require a **paradigm shift** in the Church's approach to safeguarding, and such a shift would be driven by a range of developments.

One development would be the approach to "training". The NSSG agreed a new direction of travel – **moving away** from traditional class-room training approaches that depend on PowerPoint presentations, in which training is a single event with a focus on process; and **moving towards** a model of learning pathways which:

- are **transformative** for those participating (that is, people are in some way different at the end of their pathway to the person who started it).
- are a **learning journey** (rather than a one-off event) which is interactive and

involves several learning methodologies.

- impact people at the level of their **values and beliefs** in order to affect actual **behaviours**.
- achieve the impact on values, beliefs and behaviours by having a strong focus on self-reflexivity, high quality and trusting dialogue, and hearing the voice of survivors.
- are evaluated in terms of their impact on participants' behaviours.

1.2 The impact of Covid-19

Following the NSSG's steer, work started to remodel in-person safeguarding training modules in line with the above principles.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic necessitated the development of a virtual form of the Leadership safeguarding module aimed at priests and others with a leadership role in parishes.

The Virtual Safeguarding Leadership Pathway replaces C2 which is no longer approved for use. It is significantly different as it incorporates the new principles summarised above. In particular, being structured as a journey over time that people interact with; creating opportunity for self-reflexion and promoting quality dialogue between participants by having smaller groups and a higher trainer–participant ratio than previous training; linking safeguarding with the Church's mission and scripture; and an approach to evaluation focused on behavioural outcomes.

2. What's the evidence that the Virtual Leadership Pathway can have an impact?

The Virtual Leadership module was able to be tested immediately through the need to deliver to over 200+ ordinands in late June / early July. Feedback from this was extremely positive from many participants, providing a sound basis for wider distribution.

We have also had feedback from some dioceses implementing the Leadership Pathway who are reporting positive responses, whilst at the same time recognising and working out solutions for some of the challenges that the Pathway presents.

One diocese reported the following feedback:

"We have received very positive feedback about the ZOOM module. So much so, we would like to continue to offer courses over ZOOM once face to face is possible. It would increase our capacity to deliver more training and would reduce costs.

Participants feedback so far has included:

- Really like the content
- find the discussion and reflection really impactful
- Like the convenience
- Feel more comfortable than in a classroom situation
- Felt they learned more
- Best safeguarding training have ever been on."

Here's feedback from a participant in another diocese:

“Over the last 23 years I have been involved many times with Child Protection and Safeguarding training, often dry and procedural. Of course, we need to know the procedures to follow in the case of a disclosure or concern. BUT this training is so refreshing and absolutely spot on. We do need a change in culture of the church, safeguarding needs to be an open discussion in the church and a part of the every day culture of the local and wider church.

Being able to theologically reflect on my approach to safeguarding, discussing together and not just reading case studies but also hearing victims’ voices, reflecting together and turning safeguarding into a conversation is EXACTLY what is needed. Safeguarding is not an admin task that needs to be ticked off, it is a living, real part of church life that needs to be embraced for the sake of Gods people and those who do not know him yet.

After doing this training I feel the most equipped to manage safeguarding in my job as a Youth and Children’s worker than I have ever done before and I am so grateful to you for delivering the training in this format.”

Feedback from another participant was:

“What I particularly gained from your course was a fresh understanding that safeguarding is a gospel imperative and that as leaders we must be instrumental in promoting an environment and culture that acts as a deterrent to potential abusers”

Of course, it’s not the Pathway in isolation that delivers an impact: it is how it is delivered and the skills and expertise of those delivering it which are crucial.

3. Why is the guidance requiring group sizes of no more than 12 and a ratio of one trainer for six people?

The main reason is that this is intended to be **transformative** learning. In other words, it is intended to affect people’s beliefs, values and behaviours (rather than just imparting knowledge) and that requires a deeper level of engagement, reflection, trust and dialogue than can be achieved with traditional “class room / PowerPoint” approaches with larger numbers.

With transformational learning the trainer’s task is different compared with previous C2 training: its focus is on facilitating dialogue and reflection, rather than delivering information. This means that to enable the trainer to be completely tuned in to each participant and how each participant is receiving and responding to the material, and then be able to support their engagement, requires smaller numbers.

All the professional advice (and indeed most people’s own personal and professional experience supports this) we have received confirms the same principle: *“less is more if you are looking for engagement; the smaller the group, the greater the level of engagement; if you are just passing on knowledge then you can have bigger groups”*. The Church’s Safeguarding Training Working Group (STWG: the body delegated by the NSSG to lead on the strategic development of safeguarding training) is clear that low ratios are critical to achieving the desired learning outcomes.

Ken Farrimond (the Ministry Division’s Virtual Learning Environment and Blended Learning Officer) summarises the position thus:

“Transformative learning is much easier to achieve when tutors work with smaller groups. This is the standard understanding in the literature on Adult Education, but it is not new. If you look at the way Jesus taught in the New Testament you will find that at times he did speak to 5000 plus people, at other times he worked with groups of 120. However, his really transformative teaching was with a group of 12 and often just with three: Peter, James and John”.

There are other reasons why low ratios are important:

- **The nature of interaction on Zoom** means that achieving engagement of participants is even more challenging. As one member of the STWG observed: *“How many people can talk normally on zoom without having to mute or wave their hands in order to speak. With four people it is clearly possible and with six it will usually work well. But if you go beyond that to 8 or 10 people you will find that zoom etiquette needs to be applied and this changes the whole dynamic of the discussion.”*
- When in-person learning starts again (and this might not be until sometime in 2021) it will still be necessary to have lower ratios than traditional training for the reasons set out above, but they could be higher than pure Zoom-based pathways e.g. 2:16.
- **Trust and sharing.** The nature of issues discussed in this learning pathway can result in people wanting to share personal insights and experiences, or could act as triggers. Smaller groups / ratios enable such instances to be handled safely, and in a way that can be beneficial both to those sharing and others participating.
- **Confidence and skills of the trainer.** Many people will be new to both using Zoom as a training medium and the facilitative role of the trainer. [We have provided training on using Zoom for training; if you have not been able to access this training do let us know and we will arrange further training in September.](#)

4. Who can be a co-facilitator / trainer?

A range of people could undertake this, depending on local circumstances. In Chichester diocese a group of volunteer trainers has been developed over a number of years who can be called on. If you are delivering the Pathway to a group of priests, one safeguarding trainer has found it helpful to co-deliver with a priest.

The two facilitators / trainers would each lead a small group session but when together with the group of 12 could focus on different tasks e.g. one focussing on the content, the other on the dynamics and running of the group.

[This sort of resource planning could be part of the support that the NST could provide as part of the delivery plan referred to in 5. below.](#)

5. How do we manage the numbers of people who need to access the Virtual Safeguarding Leadership Pathway?

We recognise that there can be pressure to “get people trained” and understandably people might be worried about their capacity to do this with a ratio of 2:12.

In recognition of this situation, we are advising dioceses to plan the delivery of this Pathway over a period of several months, prioritising those who have the greatest need e.g. priests. This might mean that those with lower priority might end up being a few months over their three-year time-limit, but this is an acceptable position if it ensures the delivery of an experience which is transformative.

[The NST is very happy to work alongside DSAs to help work out a delivery plan along these lines.](#)

6. What is the relationship between the Virtual Safeguarding Leadership Pathway and other learning developments?

Differences from C2

This Pathway is very different from the previous C2 training for the reasons set out

above. Another way in which this Pathway is different is its focus on the principle of “Leadership”. C2 was a process approach – it focussed on what processes people in a leadership position should follow. This Pathway explores the nature of safeguarding leadership – the values, beliefs and behaviours, ideas of organisational culture.

No longer a short-term measure

When Covid-19 ended in-person training, we thought the Virtual Pathway would be a relatively short-term arrangement until in-person learning started again and we would have the new in-person pathway in place. It is now clear that the Virtual Leadership Pathway is not an interim arrangement but will be the official Safeguarding Leadership offer for many months to come.

Connection with future in-person Leadership Pathway

When we do return to in-person delivery, the In-person Leadership module will be based on the structure and content of the Virtual version. This means there will be consistency of learning experience people who have completed the Virtual version with those who will do the In-person version.

Connection with Virtual Senior Leadership Pathway

The Virtual Leadership Pathway will link to the Virtual Safeguarding Senior Leadership Pathway which is now under development for Bishops, Archdeacons, Deans etc. and will be delivered by the NST later this year. This will replace C4. It will be based on the same principles and structure of the Virtual Leadership Pathway. This means there will be real synergy between what the senior clerics are receiving and what their priests and other leaders will have received.

One of the elements of the Virtual Senior Leadership Pathway will be making the connection between senior clergy learning and that of their priests etc (by involving direct conversations). This is because a shared learning experience will have a bigger impact on the achievement of overall organisational change.

Connection with the wider suite of safeguarding pathways under development

The new in-person safeguarding modules which are being developed will all be based on the principles agreed by NSSG so experience of delivering the Virtual Safeguarding Leadership Pathway will be good preparation for that.

7. Do we need to deliver this training to retired clergy with PTO whose safeguarding training needs renewal?”

Yes, as they are in a leadership role. There was concern that some might not have access to a computer or Wi-Fi. From our soundings the number in this position might be very few but dioceses should obviously find out how many are actually in this position and consider solutions. [From the conversations we will be having with dioceses we will collate the creative solutions people have found to this and share more widely.](#)

This also links to the need for prioritising. Dioceses with a large number of clergy in this position might decide to put them lower down the priority level relative to those in full-time ministry.

8. What about people with literacy needs?

The concern here is that there are some people for whom reading and writing might be a challenge. This will not be a new phenomenon – previous training was highly dependent on PowerPoints so trainers will have faced this challenge before.

[Possible solutions could be: the participant, if not able to write their answers to the four questions, could do an audio recording on their phone or computer and send them to the](#)

trainers. The participant could talk through their answers with their PSO who could write them down and send in.

NB: as with all training, in addition to those with a literacy need there may of course be others who may need reasonable adjustments to participate and their needs will need to be taken into account.

9. How do we get 360-degree feedback in a Covid-19 situation?

One of the differences between the Virtual Leadership Pathway is the method for evaluation; that is, it asks for participants to gather feedback from third parties to see whether there is any evidence of behavioural change. This is obviously difficult to do in a Covid-19 situation when people are not able to observe others. Accordingly, alternative evaluation methods are available through personal reflection. With this, participants are asked to complete:

- A reflection on how they have applied the learning in a real life scenario; or
- A reflection on a safeguarding situation they have handled in the past and how they would approach it differently now as a result of the learning.

The reflection is submitted to the trainer and it's only at that point that the certificate of successful completion is delivered.

10. What support can the NST provide for me?

If you have any questions or concerns about the delivery of this House of Bishops' guidance, do contact us and we will work with you to find a way forward. For example:

1. We will work alongside you to help develop a prioritised delivery plan, and to identify possible co-delivery resources within your diocese / cathedral.
2. Craig and Lisa can co-deliver with you when you deliver for the first time.
3. We can arrange further support with some of the skills this pathway requires – for example, there is a greater focus on facilitation of dialogue rather than “teaching”. Please note: as part of the financial proposals the NST put forward, we asked for funding for a trainers' development programmes which would address some of these issues. In the meantime, we can put something in place for anyone who would find such input useful.
4. We can arrange more training on the use of Zoom for training purposes.
5. We can provide direct briefings for the leadership teams in dioceses / cathedrals.

Craig Hutton and Lisa Clarke will be in touch with you over the next four weeks so that we can build up a picture of what is happening in every diocese and the ways in which we can support you. Please contact David Worlock, Lisa Clarke and Craig Hutton directly to discuss any aspect of the Pathway.

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