

Cathedral coordination

My wife is on a mission to visit each of England's 42 cathedrals. She has a Pilgrim Passport in which she collects a stamp from each one she visits. Starting in early 2025 she has now visited 24, and on Easter Saturday we managed two in one day. We started out by dropping into St Nicholas Cathedral, Newcastle, before driving south towards London and stopping for lunch in Southwell. Being on Lincolnshire District's doorstep I'd imagine that many readers have also paid a visit to the Minster with the twin pepper pot towers. This magnificent building also serves as the cathedral for the Diocese of Southwell, and this was our first visit.

I haven't joined my wife on all her excursions, but when I do I have a good look around to see how each cathedral recognises their safeguarding responsibilities. I came away from Southwell seriously impressed. Tucked into every seat was a folded green card that summarised the cathedral's policy, providing advice and guidance about what to do whether you are a witness to or victim of abuse, along with contact details and a photo of the cathedral safeguarding officer. In at least four places around the body of the building, information about safeguarding adults was posted together with details of Nottinghamshire Adult Safeguarding Board. At the entrance to the choir there was an explanatory notice about not taking photographs of young choir members. On the back of the gents' toilet doors were posters about men being the potential victims of bullying and domestic abuse, signposting where to get help.

I'm sure that most of our churches take active steps to publicise our Methodist policy and advertise local advice and support services, but what struck me at Southwell was the overall impact of their coordinated effort with direct references to at least three types of abuse and the positioning of individual cards that discreetly provided all the information that a concerned person might require. This conveys a real sense of a place that takes safeguarding seriously, weaving into its physical appearance clear statements about its ambition to be a safe space.

Elsewhere the District will be sharing a summary of the Safeguarding audit report that was delivered to us at the end of March. Overall, the feedback was pretty positive, but with a few recommendations where we can do a bit better. The District can be re-assured, however, that we have most of the essential building blocks for a safer church firmly embedded. Therefore, thank you to all of you who, in each church and circuit, give of your time to make all this happen. It is really appreciated.

Now all it remains for me to do is to plan how my wife and I hit Truro and Carlisle – probably not in a single day though...

A happy Easter season to you all.

Grahame Snelling
District Safeguarding Group Chair