

Questions and Responses from the INEQE Audit Survey Information and Briefing Sessions

The two sessions were held on 20th August & 1st September 2026

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Completing the Survey - Accessibility, Confidentiality & Inclusivity

We heard:

“What can we do to help those who are not digitally literate or who have limited access to technology?”

“Many of our parishioners don't use digital technology at all”

“I won't use my mobile or QR code for this and work on a desktop so will need a website.”

“Should we, as Safeguarding Officers have surveys available (hard copies) for availability to everybody?”

“What about those who are unable to read/write/visually impaired?”

“I think I saw in the first question male or female for those who would not be registered in this binary way does not seem very inclusive or encouraging as the first question”

Our response:

Thank you for the questions and feedback raised during the seminar. We fully recognise that some members of our congregations and communities may face challenges in accessing an online survey, whether due to limited digital literacy, lack of access to

technology, visual impairment, language barriers, or simply because they do not use smartphones, QR codes, or the internet regularly.

Firstly, please be reassured that, as well as QR codes, we will share the survey link through a variety of communication channels. This means that anyone who prefers not to use a QR code, or is unable to do so, will be able to access the survey directly via a simple web link. Our aim is to make participation as easy and accessible as possible for everyone.

At present, our primary recommendation is that a member within the local parish team sits down with the respondent and completes the survey directly with them using a suitable device, such as a laptop, computer, or tablet. We believe this is the most effective way of ensuring that those who may otherwise struggle to access the survey are still able to have their views heard.

Completing the survey together directly through the survey portal offers a number of benefits:

- Responses are entered into the system immediately, removing the need for any later processing.
- No paper copies containing confidential information need to be stored, managed, or securely disposed of.
- The survey can be completed collaboratively, allowing support to be provided where required.
- The text size can be increased on screen, which may assist those with visual impairments or reading difficulties.
- The survey portal includes a built-in translation function, which may be helpful for respondents who would prefer to engage with the survey in another language.

We appreciate that this approach will require some local support and coordination within parishes, but we feel it provides the most secure, efficient, and accessible means of participation for many people who may otherwise be excluded.

Confidentiality

We would also like to offer some reassurance regarding confidentiality, particularly where respondents are being supported to complete the survey by a member of the parish team.

Most, if not all, of the survey questions focus on general statements about safeguarding culture within the Diocese, which respondents are asked to rate on a scale from **"Strongly Agree"** to **"Strongly Disagree."** The survey is not designed to collect detailed personal experiences or case-specific information. Respondents can share as much or as little information as they feel comfortable providing, and there is no expectation that

individuals disclose personal circumstances or safeguarding concerns through the survey itself.

Paper copies

We are also aware of concerns regarding those who are unable or unwilling to complete the survey online, even with support. We are currently exploring whether it would be possible to produce paper versions of the survey questions for local use. If this proves possible, we will circulate further guidance and materials in due course.

It is important to note, however, that neither INEQE nor the Parish Safeguarding Team can process paper survey responses on behalf of parishes. Should a paper-based approach become available, responsibility for printing the forms, supporting respondents to complete them, securely storing the responses, entering them onto the online survey, and then confidentially destroying the paper copies would rest with the local parish team.

For the time being, therefore, we are encouraging parishes to focus on the direct online completion method wherever possible. We believe this offers the most straightforward, secure, and accessible route for enabling participation from those who may otherwise experience barriers to engaging with the survey, while also ensuring that responses are captured accurately and submitted immediately.

Inclusivity

We also appreciate the feedback regarding the survey's demographic questions, specifically the observation that an early question appears to offer only "Male" and "Female" response options.

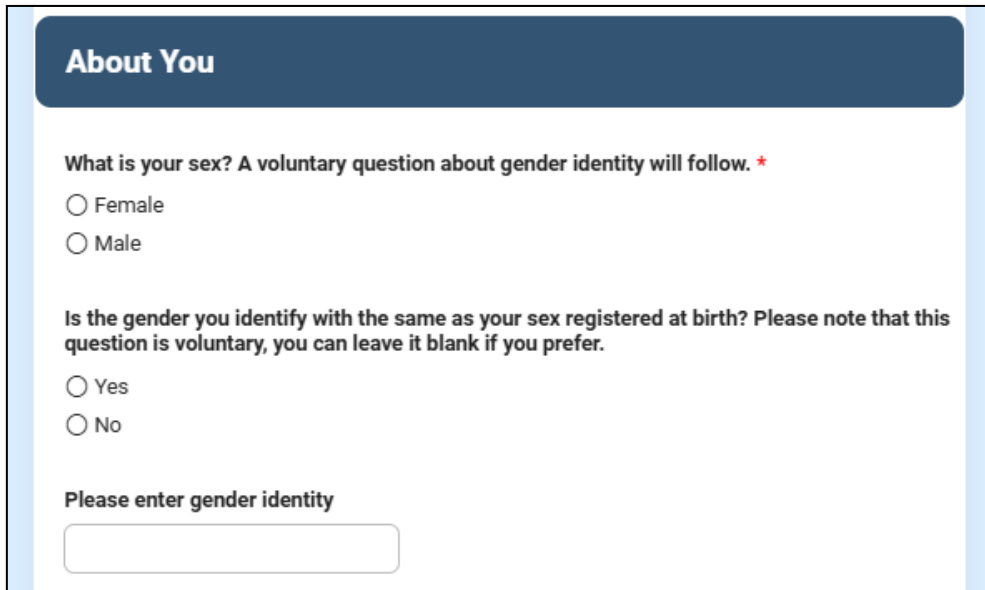
We understand that this may not be particularly inclusive to some respondents and could potentially create a negative first impression for individuals whose gender identity is not reflected within a binary framework.

Whilst this question appears early in the survey, we are aware that there are follow-up questions that allow respondents to provide additional information about their gender identity and ensure that it is recorded more accurately and appropriately. As a result, the initial question is not the only opportunity for respondents to describe how they identify.

A screenshot has been included below to demonstrate the subsequent questions available and how respondents are able to provide further information beyond the initial male/female selection.

We recognise the importance of ensuring that everyone feels represented and able to participate in the survey comfortably, and we are grateful for feedback such as this,

which helps highlight areas that may be concerning to some respondents when first accessing the survey.



The screenshot shows a survey section titled "About You" in a dark blue header. Below the header, the first question is "What is your sex? A voluntary question about gender identity will follow. *". It has two radio button options: "Female" and "Male". The second question is "Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth? Please note that this question is voluntary, you can leave it blank if you prefer." It also has two radio button options: "Yes" and "No". At the bottom, there is a text input field with the label "Please enter gender identity".

Survey Materials and Resources

We heard:

"How soon will we get the posters? It's not long to September and many church and group members will be away on holiday in September/October"

"Will the "poster" be in pdf form and in other forms that might be published in (hard copy) parish magazines?"

Our response:

Thank you for your questions regarding the survey publicity materials.

INEQE are currently preparing a communications pack which we anticipate will include a poster that can be displayed within churches, parish buildings, and other community settings. The purpose of the poster will be to help raise awareness of the survey and provide a QR code that links directly to the survey landing page.

We appreciate the concern about timescales, particularly given that many church members and community groups may be away during September and October. Please be assured that as soon as we receive the materials from INEQE, we will circulate them to parishes without delay so that they can be used as early as possible within the survey period.

At present, we understand that these materials are likely to be provided electronically rather than as printed hard copies. Accordingly, we anticipate that parishes will need to print their own copies locally according to their needs and the locations where they wish to promote the survey.

We are hopeful that the resources provided will be in formats that are easy to share across a variety of channels, including parish newsletters, magazines, websites, social media, and noticeboards. However, until we receive the final communications pack from INEQE, we are unable to confirm the exact formats that will be available.

As soon as we receive further information, including any posters, digital assets, or guidance on their use, this will be circulated to parishes along with any relevant instructions or recommendations.

Survey Timescales and Data Reliability

We heard:

“When does the survey close?”

“When are we likely to be getting any feedback from the survey/audit?”

“Surely the integrity and reliability of the data is compromised from the outset given that there's no check or limit on multiple submissions by any one person - could skew the evaluation?”

Our response:

We currently expect the survey to be open for approximately **six weeks** from its launch date. At present, we anticipate that the survey will open in **mid-September**, although we are awaiting final confirmation from INEQE. As soon as we receive confirmation of the launch date and survey period, this information will be circulated to all parishes.

When are we likely to receive feedback from the survey and audit?

The survey forms one part of INEQE's wider audit fieldwork and evidence-gathering process. Responses submitted through the survey are sent directly to INEQE and are not accessible to the Diocese or Parish Safeguarding Teams. We do not manage the survey platform, receive survey responses, or have access to individual submissions.

Once the survey period has closed and INEQE have completed their wider audit activity, they will analyse the information gathered alongside other sources of evidence. We expect any findings, feedback, and recommendations to form part of the overall audit reporting process. Further information regarding timescales for this will be shared once it becomes available.

How is the reliability of the data protected if multiple submissions are possible?

We appreciate the concern that the ability to submit more than one response could potentially have implications for the integrity of the data. We are mindful that the survey has been intentionally designed in a way that does allow for multiple responses in certain circumstances. For example, where individuals participate in more than one

church community, worshipping congregation, or diocesan activity, INEQE may wish to capture feedback relating to those different experiences.

INEQE are aware of the methodological considerations associated with this approach and the potential for multiple submissions. As an experienced independent safeguarding audit provider, they have processes and mechanisms in place to review, triangulate, and interpret the data received alongside other sources of evidence gathered throughout the audit.

The survey is therefore only one element of the overall audit process and is considered alongside a range of other information and findings. INEQE will apply their professional judgement when analysing responses to identify themes, trends, and areas requiring further exploration, helping to ensure that the final audit findings are based on a broad evidence base rather than survey data alone.

We hope this provides some reassurance regarding both the management of survey responses and the way in which the information gathered will be interpreted as part of the wider independent audit process.

Audit Methodology, Interviews & Fieldwork

We heard:

“Is INEQE wishing to have face to face interviews with selected people e.g. PSOs etc?”

“What will the fieldwork involve for us next year?”

“Does the audit go beyond what we are discussing this evening? E.g. will INEQE be looking at the dashboards, even church notice boards etc?”

“In terms of data drawn by INEQE from, e.g. Parish Safeguarding Dashboards, is there a 'snapshot date'?”

Our response:

Thank you for these questions. We appreciate that many people are keen to understand what the next stages of the audit process will involve and whether there is anything specific they need to prepare for.

At present, we are awaiting further information from INEQE regarding the interview stage of the audit, which is expected to take place in **early January**. We do not yet know who INEQE may wish to speak to, or the specific groups and individuals they may wish to include as part of their fieldwork. We are very mindful that people's diaries fill up quickly and that many of you already have significant commitments. Please be assured that, as soon as we receive this information from INEQE, we will circulate it promptly and contact any individuals who may be involved at the earliest opportunity.

In terms of INEQE's wider audit methodology, the audit extends beyond the survey and includes a range of evidence-gathering activities. Full details of the methodology can be found on the INEQE website:

Church of England Audit Methodology:

<https://ineqe.com/churchofengland/audit-methodology/>

The audit is designed to build a broad picture of safeguarding arrangements and culture across the Diocese, drawing on a range of information sources and evidence.

For most parish representatives, however, the key focus at this stage is to support participation in the survey and encourage as many people as possible to contribute. Beyond this, there is no expectation that parishes undertake special preparations or additional work outside of their normal safeguarding responsibilities.

Our advice is simply to continue with **business as usual**. The purpose of the audit is for INEQE to gain an authentic understanding of how safeguarding is experienced and managed within the Diocese. This means that maintaining normal processes, procedures and safeguarding activities is likely to provide the most accurate picture of current practice.

This also applies to questions regarding Parish Safeguarding Dashboards and other safeguarding systems, records, and resources. At present, we are not working towards a specific "snapshot date" by which all information must be uploaded or updated. Rather, we would encourage everyone to continue updating dashboards and other safeguarding records in line with their usual processes and regular checks.

By maintaining records and systems as part of normal day-to-day practice, INEQE will be able to gain a realistic understanding of how safeguarding information is managed and monitored across the Diocese, rather than a picture based on activity undertaken solely in preparation for the audit.

As we receive further information from INEQE regarding interviews, fieldwork activity, timescales, or any specific requirements, we will share this with parishes as quickly as possible.

Who Should Take Part in the Survey?

We heard:

“What about supporting other vulnerable groups, not just children and young people?”

“Presumably 'parishioner' includes anyone living within the parish, not necessarily parish church attenders.”

“What about Festival Churches?”

“As this session was introduced, the phrase 'parish team' was used. What would this be?”

“If we restrict our survey population to those working in, attending church and those attending our events, how could others in the community be approached, notably vulnerable people without access or not turning to the Church?”

“Approach to non-church members. Parish councils? Coffee mornings etc attended by non-church members?”

Our response:

These are helpful questions and highlight the importance of ensuring that the survey reaches as broad a range of people as possible.

According to INEQE's published audit methodology, the surveys are intended to engage a wide spectrum of individuals from dioceses, parishes, and cathedral communities, allowing people to share their views and experiences relevant to the audit. The methodology specifically identifies the Parish Community as including, for example, *parishioners, worshippers, and attendees of other parish activities*, alongside a separate survey for the Parish Workforce, which includes clergy, parish staff, volunteers, choristers, bell ringers, and others involved in parish life.

This means the survey is not limited solely to regular church attendees. We would encourage participation from anyone who interacts with the church and parish community, whether that be through worship, community activities, social outreach, pastoral support, coffee mornings, community events, or other parish-led initiatives. Someone does not need to attend church regularly, or indeed at all, to have a view that may be relevant to the audit.

Likewise, **Festival Churches are included within the audit process**, and we would encourage those connected with Festival Churches to participate in the same way as other parish communities.

What do we mean by "parish team"?

During the seminar, the phrase *parish team* was used simply as a collective term for those involved in supporting and leading parish life locally. This may include, for example:

- Incumbents and clergy
- Churchwardens
- Parish Safeguarding Officers
- PCC members
- Administrators

- Volunteers and other key parish representatives

The exact composition will vary from parish to parish.

Reaching beyond regular church attenders

We recognise that not all members of the community engage with their local church directly, and some vulnerable individuals may have little or no contact with church activities. The survey itself is intended to be openly accessible so that anyone who wishes to share their views can do so. As such, we would encourage parishes to consider promoting the survey as widely as possible through the channels available to them.

This might include:

- Church services and notices
- Coffee mornings and community groups
- Parish newsletters and magazines
- Community noticeboards
- Social media and parish websites
- Other parish activities attended by members of the wider community

The aim is not to restrict participation to church members, but rather to ensure that anyone who has contact with, volunteers within, works with, worships at, visits, or engages with the parish community can contribute if they wish.

As noted in our guidance on accessibility, we would also encourage parishes to support those who may face barriers to completing the survey independently, including people with limited digital access, those who require accessibility adjustments, and other vulnerable groups whose voices might otherwise be less likely to be heard.

Ultimately, the survey is intended to provide INEQE with as broad a range of perspectives as possible. Whether someone has attended church for many years, visited only once, volunteers at a community event, attends a coffee morning, or simply has experience of engaging with the parish community in another way, they are encouraged to take part and share their views.

Other Questions

We heard:

“Will the Diocese team be making this known through the local media?”

“Much in Church Times about senior officers resisting change. Where does Norwich stand?”

“What does INEQE stand for? There is an assumption that we are aware of the abbreviations.”

“We should have been able to block out that survey window in our diaries ages ago! How can we get round all our groups in that short time with our other commitments?”

Our response:

Thank you for raising these questions.

Will the Diocese be promoting the survey through local media?

As part of the audit process, we will be considering a range of opportunities to raise awareness of the survey and encourage participation. However, at present, our immediate focus is on ensuring that information reaches parishes and church communities as quickly and effectively as possible once it is received from INEQE.

INEQE are due to provide a communications and awareness-raising pack, which we anticipate will include materials such as posters, digital resources, and publicity materials. Once these are received, they will be circulated promptly to support local promotion and engagement.

Where does Norwich stand regarding safeguarding improvement and change?

The purpose of the INEQE audit is to provide an independent assessment of safeguarding culture and practice across the Diocese. As such, it would not be appropriate for us to pre-empt the findings or compare ourselves with commentary that may appear elsewhere.

What we can say is that the Diocese has committed fully to participating in the audit process and welcomes the opportunity for independent scrutiny. The audit is intended to identify areas of good practice as well as opportunities for improvement, helping the Diocese continue to develop and strengthen its safeguarding arrangements.

We would encourage everyone to engage openly and honestly with the audit process so that INEQE can build the most accurate picture possible.

What does INEQE stand for?

An excerpt from the [INEQE website](#):

‘INEQE’ is a portmanteau of the words ‘Innovative’ and ‘Unique’; two words that define our approach to everything we do.”

How can we manage the survey alongside our existing commitments?

We appreciate the concern that the survey window may feel relatively short, particularly given the many other responsibilities held by clergy, Parish Safeguarding Officers, churchwardens, volunteers, and parish teams.

At present, we expect the survey to be open for approximately six weeks, with an anticipated launch in mid-September. Whilst we understand that many people would have preferred more notice, the survey is only one part of the wider audit process.

We are not expecting individual parish representatives to personally visit every group or ensure that every person completes a survey. Rather, we would encourage parishes to make the survey as visible and accessible as possible through existing activities and communication channels. For example:

- Displaying posters on church premises.
- Promoting the survey during regular meetings and events.
- Including information in newsletters, magazines, and notices.
- Sharing links through parish websites and social media.
- Offering support to those who may need assistance completing the survey.

Ultimately, participation is voluntary, and our collective aim is simply to ensure that as many people as reasonably possible are aware of the opportunity to take part. We recognise the significant demands already placed on parish teams and are grateful for any support that can be offered locally to help raise awareness and encourage engagement.

Thank you

If you have any other queries related to the surveys, please email the Audit Project Team on ineqe@dioceseofnorwich.org