

Parishes of Felton and Longframlington with Brinkburn, Whittingham with Edlingham and Bolton Chapel

Priest in Charge: The Rev'd Rich Townend

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Statement on the findings of the Makin Report and the events that have followed from Rev'd Rich Townend

13/11/24

It is a sad day when the internal failings of the church make headline news. The Makin Report has revealed that those with the greatest responsibility in the church have failed in the most basic safeguarding lesson - to share and act on information. If this had been done as we are told it should be, it would have brought John Smyth to justice and prevented many more incidents of abuse.

This, of course, leads to a lack of trust in the church as a whole. All I can say is that the churches here follow robust and thorough safeguarding practices as directed by the National Safeguarding Team.

In Felton, Longframlington and Whittingham parishes, we have 48 volunteers who have undertaken safeguarding training, about 20 of whom have done this to the level of a teacher in a school. We have two superb Parish Safeguarding Officers. We talk about this in services, in our communications, and at every PCC meeting.

This gives me great confidence, at a local level, within our churches, and of course within our two C of E schools, that safeguarding is paramount. When there are failures at the top level, however, it seriously undermines our great commitment to following the necessary requirements.

I am convinced, as far as I can be, that the churches in which I serve are safe spaces for all people to be welcomed and to flourish. That's why all our volunteers give their time to undertake the relevant training and updates, because we want everyone in our communities to have that same confidence in us.

Yours in Christ,

