

Responsibilities within the parish church

1. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) and the Incumbent

The Incumbent may be called the Vicar, Rector or Parson and for the purposes of this policy will also include Priest-in-Charge.

Safeguarding arrangements within Team Ministries vary according to how a Team is constituted and how local arrangements are managed. Team Vicars, as well as Team Rectors, may be designated as Incumbents within such arrangements. Team Ministries should agree and articulate clearly their local arrangements for safeguarding roles and responsibilities, including the roles of clergy, Safeguarding Officers and PCC/District Church Council (DCC) members.

The PCC is the main decision-maker of a parish. Its members are clergy, Churchwardens and others elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) of the parish. Its powers and duties are defined by legislation and can principally be found in the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956.

It has the responsibility, along with the Incumbent, to promote the mission of God in its parish.

Legally, the PCC is responsible for the finances of the parish. It also has ultimate responsibility for the care and maintenance of all church buildings and their contents. Although these responsibilities are executed by the Churchwardens, all PCC members must share in the oversight. It has a voice in the forms of service used by the church and may make representations to the Bishop on matters that affect the welfare of the parish.

All PCCs are charities, although most do not need to register with the Charity Commission, except those with an annual income of more than £100,000. Therefore, every member of a PCC is also a charity trustee. If a PCC is a charity it must comply with the Charity Commission guidance and legislation in relation to charities. This includes requirements around Serious Incident Reporting (SIR) as detailed in the Church of England's *Guidance for DBFs, PCCs and Religious Communities: Identifying and Reporting Safeguarding Serious Incidents to the Charity Commission*: <http://bit.ly/SafeguardingSIRGuidance>

The Incumbent's role is to provide leadership concerning safeguarding, and to encourage everyone to promote a safer church.

The PCC and the Incumbent have a duty of care to ensure the protection of the vulnerable in their church community. In terms of safeguarding, with the Incumbent the PCC will:

- **promote:**
 - a safer church for all in the church community, and ensure there is a plan in place to raise awareness of safeguarding matters, promote training and ensure that safeguarding is taken seriously by all those in the church community
- **adopt:**
 - the House of Bishops' *Promoting a Safer Church* safeguarding policy statement: <http://bit.ly/CoESaferChurch>
 - the House of Bishops' and Diocesan safeguarding policies and practice guidance, while being responsive to local parish requirements



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- **appoint:**
 - at least one appropriately experienced designated PSO to work with the Incumbent and PCC. This PSO should be a lay person. It cannot be the Incumbent. The PSO may also be the DBS Administrator for church officers who work with children or vulnerable adults but, if not, the PCC should appoint another individual. The PSO should be supported, trained and given a copy of the parish safeguarding policy and procedures
- **ensure that (with regard to safer recruitment, support and training) all church officers who work with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults:**
 - are recruited following the House of Bishops' safer recruitment practice guidance: <http://bit.ly/CoESaferRecruitment>
 - are aware of and work to House of Bishops' safeguarding guidance (includes both policies and practice guidance)
 - attend Diocesan Safeguarding Training at least every three years
- **provide:**
 - appropriate insurance to cover for all activities undertaken in the name of the PCC which involve children and vulnerable adults
 - access to a safeguarding handbook
- **display:**
 - a formal statement of adoption of the House of Bishops' [Promoting a Safer Church](#) safeguarding policy statement. This should be signed on behalf of the PCC
 - contact details of the PSO, Churchwarden and any other local leaders
 - information about where to get help with child and adult safeguarding issues, for example local authority contact details, domestic abuse and key helplines such as ChildLine (see Appendix 5 of [Key Roles](#) for model 'safeguarding in parishes – who's who')
- **respond by:**
 - creating an environment which is welcoming and respectful and enables safeguarding concerns to be raised and responded to openly, promptly and consistently
 - having a procedure in place to deal promptly with safeguarding allegations or suspicions of abuse in accordance with the relevant policy and practice guidance and in consultation with the DSA
 - reporting all safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers to the DSA
 - ensuring that known offenders or others who may pose a risk to children and/or vulnerable adults are effectively managed and monitored in consultation with the DSA
 - complying with all data protection legislation, especially in regard to storing information about any paid and unpaid workers and any safeguarding records
 - ensuring that an 'activity risk assessment' is completed and reviewed regularly for each activity which is associated with either children or vulnerable adults and run in the name of the church.

Reviewing and reporting progress:

The PSO should regularly report on safeguarding in the parish. Safeguarding should be a standing agenda item at each PCC meeting. At the APCM the PCC should provide an annual report in relation to safeguarding. In the PCC's annual report there should be a statement which reports on progress and a statement as to whether or not the PCC has complied with the duty to have 'due regard' to the House of Bishops' guidance in relation to safeguarding.

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Hiring out church premises

- Any hire agreement with any person/body wishing to hire church premises must contain a provision whereby the person/body hiring the premises agrees to comply with the relevant safeguarding guidance issued by the House of Bishops and the Diocese.
- The hire agreement should also contain a provision whereby all those hiring church premises are required to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are protected at all times, relevant staff have had appropriate DBS checks and that all reasonable steps have been taken to prevent injury, illness, loss or damage occurring.
- The PCC should ensure that all those hiring church premises carry full public liability insurance for this, or are covered through the church's insurance (for example, hire for a children's party).

Working in a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP):

If working within an LEP, agree which denomination or organisation's safeguarding policy to follow, including where to seek advice in urgent situations in line with the practice guidance. This decision should be ratified by both the Bishop and other appropriate church leaders in the partnership and shared with the DSA; in the event of a specific safeguarding concern, ensure that all the LEP partners are notified.

During a clergy vacancy

During an interregnum the PCC must, working with the Churchwardens, ensure that all information about safeguarding matters is securely stored before passing the information on to the new Incumbent. The departing Incumbent must give the safeguarding information to the PSO who can pass the information on to the new Incumbent when he/she takes up their new role.

It is important that any new Incumbent is provided with a thorough and accurate safeguarding briefing on his/her arrival in the parish in order that they can undertake their safeguarding responsibilities as set out on pages 3-7 to 3-8.

The responsibility for ensuring that this face-to-face briefing is provided lies with the Churchwardens and PSO(s), although the new Incumbent and his/her Archdeacon should seek to ensure that he/she is briefed as soon as possible after arrival. Discretion will be required as to the level of detail which should be shared, how far past safeguarding matters are included and how the briefing is delivered. Those involved need to consider the usual parameters in relation to the sharing and subsequent storage of confidential information.

Each parish will differ but it is advised that the following types of information be shared with an Incumbent as part of their safeguarding briefing:

- details of any safeguarding worship agreements currently in place within the parish ([A Safe Church, Section 8](#))
- details of any current matters which are considered to be a 'serious safeguarding situation relating to church officers and other individuals' (as set out in the Church of England Practice Guidance, 2017: <http://bit.ly/CofEConcerns>), including those which involve an ongoing Diocesan Core Group process as set out in [A Safe Church, Section 6](#)
- details of any known individuals within the congregation where the statutory authorities have advised/confirmed that there are ongoing child protection or adult safeguarding concerns
- details of significant historical safeguarding issues which may have substantial ongoing implications for the parish

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- details of any past or current safeguarding matters which relate to any member of the ministry team.

If necessary, the DSA is available to give advice to Churchwardens, PSOs, outgoing Incumbents and Archdeacons as to whether details of specific matters should be shared with any new Incumbent.

In addition, the briefing should ensure that the new Incumbent is provided with:

- details of the most recent parish self-audit, resulting action plan and discussions at PCC meetings, including any particular responsibilities assigned to them as an individual
- details of where parish safeguarding records are held, access arrangements and so on
- arrangements for ensuring the safe recruitment of paid staff and volunteers within the parish
- the location of *A Safe Church* and a list of key parish and Diocesan safeguarding personnel
- details of the current Diocesan safeguarding training programme and any upcoming parish/ deanery safeguarding training
- details of all church activities relating to children, young people and vulnerable adults.

In some cases, a member of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST) may meet the new Incumbent on his/her arrival in the parish.

2. The Churchwarden

Churchwardens are the senior lay representatives of the parish. The role of the Churchwarden is extremely varied but generally involves management, maintenance and mission in accordance with the Churchwardens Measure 2001 and the Canons of the Church of England (see in particular Canon E1). They are the foremost in representing the laity and in co-operating with the Incumbent, and they have a duty to maintain order and decency in the church and churchyard, particularly during the times of divine service. In co-operation with the Incumbent, Churchwardens are generally responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the parish.

In relation to safeguarding, the Churchwardens work with the Incumbent, PCC and PSO to:

- ensure that, in the period of a vacancy (during an interregnum), the Incumbent's safeguarding roles and responsibilities are fulfilled, in consultation with the PCC, PSO and the Area Dean
- pay attention to the specific needs of children and vulnerable adults when undertaking health and safety inspections and risk assessment
- ensure that risk assessments are carried out before new activities are undertaken
- ensure that all parish activities with children and vulnerable adults are adequately supervised and insured
- ensure that the parish has procedures for responding to complaints and grievances
- answer questions regarding safeguarding as they arise in the Archdeacon's visitations, and respond to any specific safeguarding advice which may be given by the Archdeacon.

3. The Parish Safeguarding Officer

Each PSO's role is to:

- work closely with the Incumbent to advise within the parish on all safeguarding matters relating to children, young people and vulnerable adults
- receive, with the Incumbent, any concerns about children or adults in the parish and make sure that proper advice is sought and proper referrals are made

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- report all matters relating to concerns and allegations of abuse against church officers, in liaison with the Incumbent, to the DSA who will liaise with the statutory agencies as required. Concerns about the Incumbent should be raised directly with the DSA
- ensure that any ex-offenders with offences against children or vulnerable adults known to be in the church community are notified to the DSA and contribute to managing safeguarding agreements
- promote safer practices in all activities and make any recommendations required taking into account the particular arrangements of the parish
- seek to ensure that safer recruitment practice is followed, with the support of the Diocese
- attend Diocesan safeguarding training at least every three years
- maintain safeguarding records
- complete national, Diocesan and parish safeguarding self-assessments as required
- contribute to the annual review of parish safeguarding arrangements
- regularly report on safeguarding in the parish. Safeguarding should be a standing agenda item at each PCC meeting. At the APCM the PCC will provide an annual report in relation to safeguarding.

The PSO may also be responsible for:

- being the Children's and/or Vulnerable Adult Advocate
- being the DBS Administrator (see below)
- supporting other church officers who work with children or vulnerable adults
- providing or arranging provision of safeguarding training for parish workers (both volunteers and paid staff).

The PSO should preferably be someone who is a lay person, has good pastoral and organisational skills and experience of working with children/young people or vulnerable adults, although not always currently involved in such work in the parish. They should not be the Incumbent or his or her spouse or partner. Please see Appendix 8 of [Key Roles](#) for a model role description.

The level of the resource will be dependent on the size and complexity of the parish. These roles are often voluntary but some larger parishes have paid posts. Some parishes have one PSO for children and one for vulnerable adults. If required, in rural parishes or in group arrangements, arrangements for safeguarding may be shared whilst remembering that legal responsibilities will continue to rest with the individual parishes.

4. The Parish DBS Administrator

Every parish should have a nominated person who is responsible for the administration of DBS applications. Usually the PSO will incorporate the administration of DBS applications into his/her role. However, where necessary or appropriate (for example in large, busy parishes), this position may be undertaken by a separate person.

In particular, the parish DBS Administrator is responsible for:

- establishing the true identity of the applicant, through the examination of a range of identification documents as set out by the DBS
- checking and validating the information provided by the applicant on the application form
- ensuring that the application form is fully completed and the information it contains is accurate.