**Introduction to the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer**



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Congratulations on your appointment as safeguarding officer in your parish or benefice. The role you have been appointed to is central to the safeguarding of children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable to neglect, abuse or exploitation in your church community. You are now part of the wider safeguarding team for the Diocese. The team includes the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and the Diocesan Safeguarding Trainer, all are based in Wells. In turn they are supported by the Diocesan Safeguarding Panel, which is made up of people from professional backgrounds such as Police and Probation, as well as clergy and Parish Safeguarding Officers, who meet quarterly in Wells to discuss how safeguarding is managed in the Diocese. The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers are there to advise and support you in your role, so please do not hesitate to contact them if you need help or information.

**Safe Recruitment for PSO’s**

As a new safeguarding officer we will expect you to have been “Safely Recruited”

* You will have been asked to complete an application form and provide references.
* You should have had a discussion with a member of clergy, churchwarden and possibly the outgoing safeguarding officer about what the role entails.
* You will have been asked to complete a Confidential Declaration and a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS Criminal Records Check) form

All of these things help to ensure that the Church community is kept safe, and that the right people are encouraged to support the parish by taking on important volunteer roles. If you haven’t been safely recruited, please talk to your member of clergy about the steps that have been missed out, and make sure they are done before you start your role.

This is the same process we would expect the parish to follow when people are being recruited to other parish roles where they will be in a leadership position, providing pastoral care, or working with children and adults who may be vulnerable. Before we can add your details to our database as the Safeguarding Officer for your parish or benefice, we need confirmation from your member of clergy, or the PCC Secretary, that the safer recruitment process has been completed, and the PCC have confirmed you in role, and have minuted that decision.

**Training**

During your first year in role, you will need to attend a Diocesan safeguarding training session. Although you may have attended training before elsewhere, because the Church welcomes everyone, including families, younger and older people, people who may have disabilities or be vulnerable in some other way, and people who may have committed serious offences in the past, Diocesan Foundation Safeguarding Training focusses on how you can keep the whole church community safe. It therefore includes some issues that may not be covered in training in schools, care homes or Children’s Social Services. These take place in a variety of locations around the Diocese, and are advertised on the Diocesan Website as well as the Safeguarding newsletters and training brochures that are issued at least twice a year. You will need to attend training at least once every 3 years, and as well as the Basic Awareness in Safeguarding (C0) you will also be required to complete the Foundation Module (C1) and the Leadership Module (C2). There are also a range of specialist modules which you may like to complete, depending upon the activities in your church.

**Guidance for PSO’s**

The Safeguarding section on the Diocesan website offers you useful information including;

* Policies and procedures
* What to do if you have a concern
* Guidance about how to respond to some of the queries that regularly come up.
* A list of training dates which will be updated during the year as we book in additional dates.

The Safeguarding section is easy to find, as every page on the Diocesan Website has a button which links you straight to the safeguarding pages.

In addition, the National Church is bringing out a Parish Safeguarding Handbook in Summer 2018 which will replace our local Diocesan Safeguarding Policy and handbook. A link to this will be on our website once it is available.

**The Role of the Parish Safeguarding Officer**

The parish safeguarding officer is involved in 4 main strands of activity:

* Safer recruitment, including ensuring that the Church of England Safer Recruitment policies are followed whenever someone is being recruited to a paid or volunteer role in the parish; and the administration of the DBS checking system;
* Responding to any disclosure made or concerns raised if somebody believes that a child, young person or vulnerable adult may have suffered, may be suffering or is at risk of harm though abuse, exploitation or neglect. This response includes keeping clear records of any concerns raised, and liaising with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser. It may also involve helping to arrange support for any victims of abuse, and reporting concerns to the statutory authorities such as Police and Social Services;
* Working with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and the Incumbent to support and monitor the attendance at Church of people who have been accused or convicted of violent or sexual offences, or other offences against vulnerable people;
* Raising the Profile of Safeguarding in your parish, by providing regular reports to the PCC, putting up on noticeboards or distributing copies of the Safeguarding Newsletter, encouraging relevant people to attend safeguarding training and ensuring that the Parish has adopted and follows Diocesan Safeguarding Polices.

**Record keeping**

Because of the nature of this role, it is important that you have somewhere secure and confidential to keep safeguarding paperwork. This could be a locked drawer in the parish office, or a lockable file box at your home, or you could ask your incumbent to store it for you. Confidential information would include any information relating to an allegation or disclosure of abuse, any concerns raised about anyone, DBS records, and completed references and Confidential Declaration forms. You may also need to store non-confidential paperwork such as blank copies of Confidential Declaration forms, leaflets about helping services available in your area and copies of the Church of England Parish Safeguarding Handbook and Safer Recruitment Practice Guidance

You will need to keep a list of everyone who has a DBS check, recording details such as:

* The reference number
* Date of the check
* What role the check was for
* What level it is at
* Whether or not it is clear of any “blemishes” (convictions, cautions and Police information).

You could keep this information on a sheet of paper, or on a spreadsheet on your computer, as long as no-one else can access it. When someone changes their role to one needing a higher level of check, for example moves from being a crèche assistant to crèche leader, you will need to confirm whether they need a new DBS check; DBS checks are due for renewal after 5 years unless someone changes to another role in which case they should be considered straight away. If the DBS certificate has a blemish on it you need to contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team so that they can advise you whether the person can still take on the role.

The Diocese uses an electronic DBS system, so that the forms are filled in online and instead of needing to see the certificate to check it is clear, you will receive an email with this information. We hope this will make the process quicker and easier. This does mean though that you will need access to a computer, and because it will be accessing people’s personal data to complete the DBS identity checks, it will need to be one where your account can be secured with a password, or that is not available to anyone else to use. In some parishes, a separate DBS administrator has been appointed to assist the Parish Safeguarding Officer. We send out a lot of information by email and put it up on the website, such as the newsletter, information about training and changes to policies, so it can be very helpful to your role if you are able to use a computer and if we can have your email address.

Once you have settled into your role, and have attended Foundation Safeguarding Training, you may want to think about hosting or delivering some safeguarding training in your parish. We have a number of Parish Safeguarding Officers who are prepared to visit other parishes to provide Safeguarding Training, and if you feel confident to do so, you could deliver the training yourself. We provide training and all of the materials should you wish to do this.

**Carrying out Safer Recruitment Interviews**

We have summarised the Church of England Safer Recruitment Guidance to make it more user-friendly for parishes, and it is available to download from the Safe Recruitment tab on the Safeguarding page of the Diocesan Website http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/diocese/safeguarding/safe-recruitment/

Safer Recruitment training, module S1 is available on a number of dates across the Diocese. We expect safer recruitment to have a number of stages, but not all of them are required for roles that do not involve children or adults at risk of harm or abuse.

* The applicant should complete a simple application form outlining their personal details such as name and address, and if they are working with those at risk of harm and abuse, a brief summary of their experience in the role they are applying for. There is a sample form in the Practice Guidance
* Every role, however minor should have a standard role description. This may be as simple as “on the first Saturday of each month, bring fresh flowers to the Church, throw the old flowers away, rinse the vases and arrange the fresh flowers”. For a role with Children or adults at risk of harm or abuse, it will be important that the volunteer knows what they are doing, who with, when and who they will report to if there is a concern, or if they are away on holiday or off sick.
* An interview should take place. This can be informal over a cup of coffee, but should include the safeguarding person, a member of clergy and someone familiar with the role the person will be taking on. The role description should be discussed and agreed. Some sample questions are listed below, but do change them or add some that are relevant to the role they have applied to take on.
* References should be taken up for all roles working with children and adults who may be at risk of harm and abuse. If possible one should be from outside the church, from a work colleague or previous employer, but we recognise this might not always be possible.
* A Confidential Declaration should be completed for all roles working with children and adults who may be at risk of harm and abuse, and if appropriate for the role, a DBS application. Details of who will need a DBS Check are shown in the Practice Guidance

**Sample Interview Questions:**

1. What experience have you of doing this sort of role/working with children or adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect?

2. Can you give an example of something that you have done that demonstrates your commitment to volunteering in the church/working with vulnerable groups?

3. Can you give some examples of how you would provide kind, consistent and safe care?

4. Can you describe how you would respect the background and culture of children and adults with whom you would volunteer?

5. How would you show that you treat everyone in the church/ children and adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect, as individuals with equal concern?

6. Do you know of any reason why you should not be working with children or adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect? Are there any police or employment matters outstanding which could affect your ability to volunteer?

**Contacting the Safeguarding Team**

Our contact details are below, and should you have any questions about the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer, please get in touch with us.

**Diocesan Safeguarding Manager**

Glenys Armstrong

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**Diocesan Safeguarding Trainer**

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**Diocese of Bath & Wells website**

<http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/diocese/safeguarding/>

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