

3. The Parish Roles and Responsibilities

3.1. Parochial Church Council (PCC) and the Incumbent⁴¹

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, 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.

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, 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';⁴²
- The House of Bishops' and diocesan safeguarding policies and practice guidance, while being responsive to local parish requirements;

Appoint:

- At least one appropriately experienced designated parish safeguarding officer (PSO)⁴³ 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 individual⁴⁴. The PSO should be supported, trained and given a copy of the parish safeguarding policy and procedures;

⁴¹ The incumbent may be called the vicar, rector, parson and for the purposes of this document will also include a priest-in-charge.

⁴² House of Bishops' 'Promoting a Safer Church; safeguarding policy statement'

⁴³ The requirement is to have a named PSO. If appropriate, in rural parishes or parishes held in plurality, consider joining together to share a PSO while remembering that legal responsibility will continue to rest with the individual parishes.

⁴⁴ It is noted that some dioceses will use electronic DBS systems and therefore this role may not be required.

- Additional safeguarding roles, as required. These roles are optional. They will be dependent on local need and available resources. They may also be fulfilled by the same people. Any additional roles are left to local determination (see 2.4.6.below);

Safer Recruit, Support and Train:

- Ensure that all church officers who work with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults are:
 - recruited following the House of Bishops' Safer Recruitment practice guidance;
 - 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;

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 e.g. local authority contact details, domestic abuse and key helplines e.g. ChildLine ([see Appendix 5](#) for Model 'safeguarding in parishes-who's who');⁴⁵
- Provide access to a safeguarding handbook;⁴⁵

Respond:

- Create an environment, which is welcoming and respectful and enables safeguarding concerns to be raised and responded to openly, promptly and consistently;
- Have 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 diocesan safeguarding adviser;
- Report all safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers to the diocesan safeguarding adviser;
- Ensure 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 diocesan safeguarding adviser;
- Comply with all data protection legislation especially in regard to storing information about any paid and unpaid workers and any safeguarding records;
- Ensure 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.

Review and Report Progress:

- The PSO should regularly report on safeguarding in the parish⁴⁶. 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 will be a statement which reports on progress and a statement as to whether

⁴⁵ Please note this may be the Diocesan Handbook and/or the House of Bishops' Handbook that will be available in 2017.

⁴⁶ Whether the PSO is a member of the PCC is up to local determination. At a minimum they should report regularly to it.

or not the PCC has complied with the duty to have “due regard” to the House of Bishops’ guidance in relation to safeguarding.⁴⁷

Hire out church premises:

- Any hire agreement (see [Appendix 6](#)) with any person/body wishing to hire church premises⁴⁸ 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.
- Ensure all those hiring church premises carry full public liability insurance for this, or be covered through the church insurance (for example hire for a children’s party).

Working in an LEP:

- If working within Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs), agree which denomination or organisation’s safeguarding policy to follow, including where to seek advice in urgent situations in line with the practice guidance⁴⁹. This decision should be ratified both by 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 parish safeguarding officer who can pass the information on to the new incumbent when he/she takes up his new role.

See [Appendix 7](#) for ‘Safeguarding in the Parish Checklist’.

3.2. Churchwardens

Churchwardens are the senior lay representatives of the parish. The role of the churchwarden is extremely varied but generally involves management, maintenance and mission⁵⁰ 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 parish safeguarding officer to:

- Ensure that in the period of a vacancy (during an interregnum), that the incumbent’s safeguarding roles and responsibilities are fulfilled, in consultation with the PCC, parish safeguarding officer 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 complaints⁵¹ 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 from the archdeacon.

3.3. Parish Safeguarding Officer

Each Parish Safeguarding Officer’s (PSO) 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;
- Report all matters relating to concerns and allegations of abuse against church officers, in liaison with the incumbent, to the diocesan safeguarding adviser 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 diocesan safeguarding adviser 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 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;
- 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 will provide an annual report in relation to safeguarding, ([see paragraph 2.3 above](#)).

The PSO may also be responsible for:

- Being the Children’s and /or Vulnerable Adult Advocate (see below);
- 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).

Preferably the PSO should be someone who is a lay person, has good pastoral and organisational skills and experience of working with children/young people or vulnerable

⁴⁷ See the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, section 5

⁴⁸ This means a church building and/or, church hall

⁴⁹ LEP Safeguarding Practice Guidance 2015

⁵⁰ See Canon E1 para 4 – Churchwardens are charged with active participation in the Church’s mission – “...use their best endeavours by example and precept to encourage the parishioners in the practice of true religion and to promote peace and unity among them”

⁵¹ Please note this does not mean safeguarding concerns or allegations but complaints about the quality of a response or activity.

adults, although not always currently involved in such work in the parish. They should not be the incumbent or his or her partner. Please see [Appendix 8](#) for a model role description.

The level of the resource will be dependent on the size and complexity of the parish. These roles often are 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.

3.4. Parish DBS Administrator

Every parish should have a nominated person who is responsible for administration of DBS applications⁵². Usually the parish safeguarding officer will incorporate the administration of DBS applications into his/her role, however, where necessary or appropriate (e.g. 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 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)⁵³;
- Checking and validating the information provided by the applicant on the application form;
- Ensuring the application form is fully completed and the information it contains is accurate.

3.5. Additional Parish roles

These roles are optional and will not be required in every parish. This is for local determination depending on need and resources. If any of the roles are required they can be carried out by the same person or a number of different people depending on the circumstances of a particular parish.

Children's Advocate/Youth advocates/Independent person

This person is someone whom children and young people know they could talk to about any problems, if they so wish.

Vulnerable Adults Advocate/ Independent person

This person is someone whom vulnerable adults know they could talk to about any problems, if they so wish.

Children's/Young people Officer

This person is responsible for ensuring the welfare of any children and/or young people in activities such as choirs, music groups, bell ringing or as an escort in transport arranged by the church.

⁵² It is noted that in some diocese who have using electronic DBS systems and this role will be dependent on the requirements of the electronic system in place.

⁵³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-identity-checking-guidelines/id-checking-guidelines-for-dbs-check-applications>