



Parish Safeguarding Handbook

Promoting a safer church

House of Bishops
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‘The Church of England is called to share the good news of God’s salvation through Jesus Christ. The life of our communities and institutions is integral to how we address this task. The good news speaks of welcome for all, with a particular regard for those who are most vulnerable, into a community where the value and dignity of every human being is affirmed and those in positions of responsibility and authority are truly trustworthy. Being faithful to our call to share the gospel therefore compels us to take with the utmost seriousness the challenge of preventing abuse from happening and responding well where it has’.

From ‘Promoting a Safer Church’, The Church of England’s Safeguarding Policy statement

Message from the Most Revd. and Rt. Honourable Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

Dear Colleagues

Safeguarding is at the heart of our Christian faith. We are all made unique and in the image of God. Jesus came that we might have life and have it in abundance (see John chapter 10 verse 10).

'Safeguarding' means the action the Church takes to promote a safer culture in all our churches. In order to achieve this we need to do a lot of hard work. We will promote the welfare of children, young people and adults. We will work to prevent abuse from occurring. We will seek to protect those that are at risk of being abused and respond well to those that have been abused. We will take care to identify where a person may present a risk to others, and offer support to them whilst taking steps to mitigate such risks.

The Church will take appropriate steps to maintain a safer environment for all. In order to do this we must be obedient to Christ who placed a child in the midst of his disciples and encourages us all to be childlike in our faith (see Matthew chapter 18 verses 1 – 5). So we must practice fully and positively a ministry to all children, young people and adults; to respond sensitively and compassionately to their needs in order to help keep them safe from harm.

This Parish Handbook aims to further strengthen the Church's approach to safeguarding by bringing into one place the safeguarding responsibilities for parishes as outlined in the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policies and Practice Guidance. It has been designed to support the day to day work of all parishes in relation to safeguarding and those that have a key role to play with children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable.

It is complemented by a pocket safeguarding guide, a contact safeguarding card and a Parish Safeguarding Resource Pack, that offers a range of model templates and good practice reference material.

It has been informed by best practice in faith organisations and the safeguarding sector. I want to thank very much all those that were involved in the work and all those that contributed to the consultation process and offered their helpful and informed views.

The House of Bishops commends this practice guidance for use by all Parishes, particularly the safeguarding lead on the Parochial Church Council, Clergy, Parish Safeguarding Officers, licensed lay ministers and leaders of parishes work with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

I hope that this Handbook and complementary guides and templates will contribute greatly to promoting a safer culture and building good safeguarding practice in your parish church.

I hold in my prayers all who are directly involved in this crucial work and let us all pray that we may strive to be a safe church for all.

Yours in Christ's fellowship,

Archbishop Justin Welby

Contents

Introduction	6
Quick Guide to the Handbook.....	7
Language	8
1. Parish Safeguarding Policy	9
2. Parish Roles and Responsibilities	10
3. What can a parish expect from the diocese?	12
4. Abuse and Neglect of Children	13
4.1 Statutory Definitions.....	13
4.2 Sexual Exploitation.....	13
4.3 Abuse by Children and Young People	13
4.4 e-Safety and Abuse	13
4.5 Electronic Images	14
4.6 Spiritual Abuse	14
5. Abuse and Neglect of Adults.....	14
5.1 Who Abuses Adults?	14
5.2 Relatives who are Main Carers	15
5.3 Institutions	15
5.4 Definitions of Adult Abuse	15
5.5 Human Trafficking.....	16
6. Recruiting Safely	16
7. Safeguarding Training	18
8. Responding Promptly to Every Safeguarding Concern Allegation.....	20
8.1 Quick Guide.....	20
8.2 What to do if you are concerned about a child or adult:	21
8.3 What to do if you are concerned that a church officer maybe abusing a child or adult.....	22
8.4 Guidelines for Responding to a Person Disclosing Abuse.....	24
8.5 Non-Recent Abuse	24
8.6 Domestic Abuse	25
8.7 Ministry of Deliverance.....	26
8.8 Recording, Data Protection and Information Sharing.....	26
9. Caring Pastorally for Victims/Survivors of Abuse and Affected Others.....	28
10. Caring Pastorally for Church Officers who are the Subject of Concerns or Allegations of Abuse (The Respondent) and Affected Others	29
10.1 Support for the respondent.....	29
10.2 Support when the respondent is a child or young person	30

10.3	Support to parishes and others affected by safeguarding concerns or allegations	30
11.	Responding to those that may Pose a Present Risk in Congregations.....	30
11.1	Take action	31
12.	A Safe Environment for Children	33
12.1	Code of Safer Working Practice with Children.....	33
12.2	Children’s Activities.....	34
12.3	Touch.....	35
13.	A Safe Environment for Adults.....	36
13.1	Code of Safer Working Practice with Adults.....	36
13.2	Visiting Adults	36
13.3	Risk Assessments	36
14.	Use of Social Media.....	37
14.1	What is social media?	37
14.2	Risks	37
14.3	Role of the PCC.....	38
14.4	Consents.....	38
14.5	Privacy.....	39
14.6	Facebook and Social Networking Sites	39
14.7	Mobile Phones	39
15.	Further help and guidance	39
	Acknowledgments	40

Introduction

- This handbook brings into one place the safeguarding responsibilities for parishes outlined in the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policies and Practice Guidance¹.
- It is designed to support the day to day work of Parishes in relation to safeguarding. It is complimented by a range of other resources, including a pocket safeguarding guide, a safeguarding contact card and an online Parish Safeguarding Resource Pack. These can all be found at www.churchofengland.org/more/safeguarding/templates-resources. The pack offers a range of model templates and good practice reference material. It is hoped that their use will contribute greatly to promoting a safer culture and building good safeguarding practice in your parish church.
- The handbook is aimed at all those that have a key role to play with children, young people and adults in the Parish, predominantly clergy and Parish Safeguarding Officers. Section 2 is specifically aimed at the Incumbent, chair and safeguarding lead on the Parochial Church Council. Sections 12, 13 and 14 are specifically aimed at leaders of the parish's work with children, young people and adults. It is recommended that the pocket safeguarding guide is made available to all those in the Parish that have a role with children, young people and adults, including volunteers. The safeguarding contact card is an additional quick guide that is available. It is ultimately up to local determination how to use the Handbook and guides.
- If you are a small parish church and you share a Parish Safeguarding Officer, the handbook may also be used as a joint Parish Safeguarding Handbook.
- The duty to have 'due regard' to guidance under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 applies to the handbook². In addition, the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group has made it clear that their insurance cover is only valid where House of Bishops Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance is being followed.
- The most up to date version of the Handbook will always be available on the Church of England website.

Key messages

- The welfare of the child, young person and vulnerable adult is at all times paramount, and takes precedence over all other considerations.

¹ <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/safeguarding>

² That is that all authorised clergy, bishops, archdeacons, licensed readers and lay workers, churchwardens and PCCs must have 'due regard' to safeguarding guidance issued by the House of Bishops. This means that the person under the duty is not free to disregard it but is required to follow it unless there are cogent reasons for not doing so ('Cogent' for this purpose means clear, logical and convincing). Failure by clergy to comply with the duty imposed by the 2016 Measure may result in disciplinary action.

- The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser **must** be consulted whenever a safeguarding concern of any kind arises in your parish.
- Safeguarding is part of our core faith and an integral feature of Christian life in our parish churches.

Quick Guide to the Handbook

	Section
What a PCC and Incumbent needs to have in place?	2
What support is available from a Diocese?	3
What is child abuse?	4
What is adult abuse?	5
How does the Parish ensure that all recruitment including Volunteers is done safely?	6
What safeguarding training am I expected to do?	7
What do I do if have a safeguarding concern or allegation about a child or adult?	8
What do I do if I have safeguarding concerns about someone who has a role in the Parish?	8.3
How do I respond to a safeguarding disclosure?	8.4
Who can I share information with?	8.8
How do we ensure that we support victims/survivor of abuse well?	9
What do I do if someone that attends Church may be a risk to other?	11
What is expected of me if I have a role working with children or young people?	12
How to run children's activities?	12.2
What is expected of me if I have a role working with adults?	13
What should I have in place to support good home visiting?	13.2
How do I undertake an activity risk assessment?	13.3
Where can I find guidance on the use of social media?	14

Language

- The term "**child**" is used to include all children and young people who have not yet reached their 18th birthday.
- The term "**vulnerable adult**" refers to a person aged 18 or over whose ability to protect himself or herself from violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation is significantly impaired through physical or mental disability, illness, old age, emotional fragility, distress, or otherwise; and for that purpose, the reference to being impaired is to being temporarily or indefinitely impaired³.

Please note that some adults may not consider themselves vulnerable but may be vulnerable to being abused by individuals in positions of leadership and responsibility. As adults are not inherently vulnerable and in need of protection it is important to recognise that the factors described below do not, of themselves, mean that a person is vulnerable. It is a combination of one or more of these factors and the circumstances that a person finds themselves in that can make an individual vulnerable to abuse or neglect.

Some factors that increase vulnerability include:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mental illness, chronic or acute • A sensory or physical disability or impairment • A learning disability • A physical illness • Dementia • An addiction to alcohol or drugs • Failing faculties of old age • Those who are homeless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugee families or individuals (including those seeking asylum) • Victims/survivors of domestic abuse – direct violence and/or significant emotional coercion • Those who have suffered historic abuse in childhood • A permanent or temporary reduction in physical, mental or emotional capacity brought about by life events – for example bereavement or abuse or trauma
<p>These factors may not exist in isolation; for example, someone with a drink problem masking underlying dementia; or a frail housebound elderly person with underlying depression.</p>	

- The term "**church officer**" refers to anyone appointed/elected by or on behalf of the Church to an office, post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid.

For more details on the language used in safeguarding see the full Glossary at: www.churchofengland.org/more/safeguarding/policy-practice-guidance

³ Section 6 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016.

1. Parish Safeguarding Policy

The care and protection of children, young people and adults involved in church activities is the responsibility of everyone who participates in the life of the church.

In accordance with the Church of England Safeguarding Policy 'Promoting a Safer Church' our church is committed to:

- Promoting a safer environment and culture.
- Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church.
- Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation.
- Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons.
- Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons.
- Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others.

The Parish will:

- Create a safe and caring place for all.
- Have a named Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) to work with the incumbent and the PCC to implement policy and procedures⁴.
- Safely recruit, train and support all those with any responsibility for children, young people and adults to have the confidence and skills to recognise and respond to abuse.
- Ensure that there is appropriate insurance cover for all activities involving children and adults undertaken in the name of the parish.
- Display in church premises and on the Parish website the details of who to contact if there are safeguarding concerns or support needs.
- Listen to and take seriously all those who disclose abuse.
- Take steps to protect children and adults when a safeguarding concern of any kind arises, following House of Bishops guidance, including notifying the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser(DSA)⁵ and statutory agencies immediately.

⁴ PSO can be shared by PCC's.

⁵ The '**Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser**' is a paid Diocesan worker who is professionally qualified and experienced in safeguarding practice.

- Offer support to victims/survivors of abuse regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred.
- Care for and monitor any member of the church community who may pose a risk to children and adults whilst maintaining appropriate confidentiality and the safety of all parties.
- Ensure that health and safety policy, procedures and risk assessments are in place and that these are reviewed periodically.
- Review the implementation of the Safeguarding Protection Policy, Procedures and Practices at least annually.

The Parish Safeguarding Resource Pack contains:

- Model Parish Safeguarding Policy 1 & 2
- A3 Poster of the House of Bishops Safeguarding Policy Statement

2. Parish Roles and Responsibilities⁶

The PCC and Incumbent will:

Adopt and Promote

- Adopt, promote, and display the House of Bishops' "[Promoting a Safer Church](#)" [safeguarding policy statement](#) and any local aligned statement

Appoint

- Appoint an appropriately experienced, designated Parish Safeguarding Officer to work with the incumbent and Parochial Church Council or join with other parishes to share a named Parish Safeguarding Officer

Safer Recruitment, Support and Training

- Have a policy statement on the recruitment of ex-offenders and ensure all those responsible for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults on behalf of the church are safely recruited (see section 6).
- Ensure all church officers are aware of the safeguarding policy/guidance and are trained appropriately for their roles (see section 7).
- Provide appropriate insurance to cover for all activities undertaken in the name of the Parochial Church Council which involve children, young people and vulnerable adults.

⁶ This aligns with section 3 'Parish Roles and Responsibilities' in the [House of Bishops Key Roles and Responsibilities of Church Office Holders and Bodies Practice Guidance](#).

Display

- Ensure information is displayed about how to contact the DSA(s), Parish Safeguarding Officer and how to get help outside the church with child and adult safeguarding issues.
- Ensure that Safeguarding arrangements are clearly visible on the front page of the Parish website.

Respond

- Have a procedure in place to deal promptly with safeguarding allegations or suspicions of abuse (see section 8).
- Report all safeguarding concerns or allegations including those against church officers to the DSA.
- 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 DSA (see section 11).
- Comply with all data protection legislation especially in regard to storing information about any paid and unpaid workers and any safeguarding records.
- Ensure 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

- Ensure safeguarding is a standing agenda item at each PCC meeting and that an Annual Report is provided at the Annual Parochial Council Meeting by the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Hire out church premises

- Ensure an addendum to a hire agreement is always used with any person/body hires a church premise (i.e. a church building or a church hall) for activity that involves children, young people or adults⁷. For example, a pre-school, youth group, mental health support group.

During a clergy vacancy

- During a clergy vacancy, ensure that all information about safeguarding matters is securely stored before passing the information on to the new Incumbent.

Assurance Check

Assess the parish’s safeguarding arrangements, identify strengths and areas that need further work by using the **Parish Safeguarding Checklist** and/or the **Parish Action Plan**. They are formats that help monitor and report progress on your parish’s safeguarding arrangements. Formats are available in the Parish Resource pack.

⁷ This does not include hiring by private individuals for private events, e.g. a child’s birthday party

The Parish Resource Pack contains:

- Roles and responsibilities of the Diocese, Parish Safeguarding officers, Church Wardens for further information
- Model Role Description for a PSO
- DBS model Policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders
- Model display for 'Who's Who'
- Model Activity risk assessment form
- Model Hire agreement addendum for regulated activity

3. What can a parish expect from the diocese?

- **Safeguarding Policy and Guidance**

The diocese is responsible for implementing the House of Bishop Safeguarding Policy and Guidance in parishes. All are available on the safeguarding section of the diocesan website.

- **Safeguarding advise and support**

The diocese has DSA/s who are experienced safeguarding professionals who offer safeguarding advice and support to parishes. The parish **must** report any safeguarding concerns or allegations to the DSA within 24 hours of a concern arising. DSAs will manage all concerns or allegations against church officers. The Diocese offers an out of hours service for any safeguarding concerns or allegation that arises in the evening or at the weekend.

- **Safeguarding Training**

The diocese has a responsibility to ensure the provision of safeguarding training.

- **Safer Recruitment Support**

The diocese handles applications to the DBS, mostly via a commissioned DBS provider, and offers advice on safer recruitment. The DSA is also the person who risk assesses any blemished DBS checks.

- **External Scrutiny of Safeguarding**

The diocese has a group of senior clergy and external safeguarding professionals, independently chaired by an external safeguarding expert. The group is responsible for overseeing the implementation of policy, training and the effectiveness and quality of safeguarding arrangements. Details of the group can be found on the diocesan website.

- **Complaints Procedure**

The diocese will have a complaints procedure for those wishing to complain about the handling of safeguarding issues. This should be available on the safeguarding page of the diocesan website.

- **Whistle Blowing**

Paid staff, volunteers and members of the congregation should be encouraged to acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of unacceptable practice, performance or behaviour to the attention of a parish representative. If this is not possible, concerns can be shared with the diocese. Dioceses have a Whistle Blowing Policy which should be available on the diocesan website.

4. Abuse and Neglect of Children

The abuse of children can take many forms. Children and young people with disabilities (physical, sensory and/or learning difficulties) are especially vulnerable and need special care and protection.

Crucial to good safeguarding practice is the knowledge and sensitivity to racial, cultural and religious patterns. Whilst differences must be taken into account, all children have a right to protection. Differences in child rearing do not justify child abuse; no racial group advocates the abuse of children.

4.1 Statutory Definitions

The UK central government document “Working Together to Safeguard Children” categorises and defines abuse in terms of:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect

4.2 Sexual Exploitation

Recent cases in the UK have highlighted the serious problem in some towns and cities of vulnerable adolescents, particularly children in care, being targeted by criminal gangs for sexual exploitation.

4.3 Abuse by Children and Young People

Abuse by children and young people is more common than is generally realised. It is normal for children and young people to be curious about sex and not unusual for them to experiment sexually. However, where a child is in a position of responsibility and/or power for another child and abuses that position through some sexual activity, then this is abuse. Where one child forces him or herself on another child of any age, this also is abusive. Such situations should be taken as seriously as if an adult were involved and be investigated in the same way by child protection agencies. This is important as the effect on the child victim may be as great, and the perpetrator could himself/herself be a victim of abuse and in need of help.

4.4 e-Safety and Abuse

With the ever-growing use of the internet and mobile telephones there has been a corresponding rise in the use of the internet and other electronic communication to target, groom and abuse children. Adults may target chat rooms, social networking sites, messaging services, mobile phones and the internet generally. Children are particularly vulnerable to abuse by adults who pretend to be children of comparable ages in social networking sites and who try to obtain images or engineer meetings. [See section 14.](#)

4.5 Electronic Images

The downloading, keeping or distributing of indecent images of children are all classified as sexual offences. Such offences are sometimes referred to as non-contact sexual offences. However, it must be remembered that children will have been abused in the making of the images. The texting of sexual messages and photographs (sometimes referred as 'sexting') can be particularly problematic and abusive amongst children and young people. See [Section 12, 'A Safe Environment for Children'](#).

4.6 Spiritual Abuse

Spiritual abuse is not covered by the standard statutory definitions of abuse but can be part of other forms of abuse. For instance, the Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié found that she had been severely traumatised by "deliverance prayer" at her church, which led her to believe that she was possessed by demons and was evil and wicked. A child should never be told this or encouraged to believe it. Sensitivity and discretion is required in prayer for children. These issues are equally applicable to adults⁸.

Further information is available in the **Type of Abuse Fact Sheet in the online Parish Safeguarding Resource Pack**.

5. Abuse and Neglect of Adults

All adults, including vulnerable adults, have a fundamental human right to choose how and with whom they live, even if this appears to involve a degree of risk. They should be supported to make those choices, to live as independently as possible and treated with respect and dignity.

5.1 Who Abuses Adults?

Potentially anyone, adult or child, can be the abuser of an adult. Abuse will sometimes be deliberate, but it may also be an unintended consequence of ignorance or lack of awareness. Alternatively, it may arise from frustration or lack of support. The list can include:

- Relatives of the vulnerable person including husband, wife, partner, son or daughter. It will sometimes include a relative who is a main carer.
- Neighbours.
- Paid carers.
- Workers in places of worship.
- People who are themselves vulnerable and/or are users of a care service.
- Confidence tricksters who prey on people in their own homes.

⁸ Please note the Church is currently undertaking further work on the how the inappropriate use of religious belief or practice may contribute to physical, emotional, neglect or sexual harm.

5.2 Relatives who are Main Carers

Carers can experience considerable stress, exhaustion and frustration without respite or support. This can lead to unintended poor care or abuse. Relatives who are the main carers may also be subject to abuse by those they are caring for. This abuse is often endured for long periods and unreported.

5.3 Institutions

All people living in institutions are more likely to have a degree of vulnerability. The Care Quality Commission in England has responsibility for inspecting and regulating the quality of care in institutions such as residential care homes, domiciliary care services and hospitals. The HM Inspectorate of Prisons in England inspects prisons. Some members of the church are visiting adults in institutions - hospitals, prisons and residential homes. If, as part of their church responsibilities, they have concerns about the care being given and/or the way that someone is being treated, the DSA should be contacted. They can also refer direct to the institution or, if they feel it is more appropriate, to:

- [The Care Quality Commission \(CQC\)](#)
- [The Parliamentary and Health Ombudsman \(PHSO\)](#) if the complaint relates to the NHS including GP services
- [The Local Government Ombudsman](#) if the complaint relates to adult social care
- [The Prison and Probation Ombudsman](#)

If there are immediate concerns about a child or vulnerable adult see Section 8.

5.4 Definitions of Adult Abuse

This includes:

- **Physical abuse** including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.
- **Sexual abuse** including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented, or could not consent or was pressurised into consenting.
- **Psychological abuse** including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.
- **Financial or material abuse** including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- **Neglect or acts of omission** including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.
- **Discriminatory abuse** including racist, sexist, that is based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.
- **Domestic abuse** that is usually a systematic, repeated and often escalating pattern of behaviour by which the abuser seeks to control, limit and humiliate, often behind closed doors.

5.5 Human Trafficking

The number of people trafficked for sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, 'sweat-shop labour' or other exploitation has risen sharply throughout Europe. Violence, intimidation and restriction of liberty often go hand in hand.

Further information is available in the Type of Abuse Fact Sheet in the online Parish Safeguarding Resource Pack.

6. Recruiting Safely ⁹

A key way of protecting children and adults from harm is to ensure the careful recruitment of those working with them. The House of Bishops Safeguarding Policy states '*The Church will select and vet all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the Church*'. Some may find such processes and procedures over-bureaucratic. However, the primary concern must be the need to protect children, young people and adults.

On behalf of the PCC, the Incumbent will be responsible for the appointment of those working with children, young people and vulnerable adults, paid or unpaid. The Incumbent will always recruit and appoint together with at least one other capable and competent person.	Parish Resource pack
1. Job/Role Description Construct a clear and accurate job description and person specification, or for a volunteer, a role outline, which set out what tasks the applicant will undertake, and the skills and experience required. This will include the need for a DBS check in the job description or role outline.	Model Role Description for a PSO
2. Advertise Advertise the role.	
3. Application Form Ask all applicants to complete an application form (a Curriculum Vitae may include only the information the applicant wishes to present).	Model Application Form
4. Confidential Declaration Form Ask all applicants to complete a Confidential Declaration Form.	Confidential Declaration Form

⁹ See the [House of Bishops Safer Recruitment Practice Guidance](#) for further information.

5.	<p>DBS and References</p> <p>Ask all applicants to complete a DBS application (online or paper depending on the diocese process) and provide two referees.</p>	<p>DBS Eligibility</p> <p>DBS Frequently Asked Questions www.churchofengland.org/more/safeguarding/templates-resources</p> <p>Model Reference Request Letter</p>
6.	<p>Shortlist</p> <p>Shortlist, carefully examining the application forms. Seek explanations for gaps in personal history and ensure those shortlisted have met the requirements of the person specification or role outline.</p>	
7.	<p>Interview and Review all Checks</p> <p>Have a face-to-face interview or discussion with pre-planned and clear questions to assess applicants' suitability for the role. Check the Confidential Declaration and references.</p>	<p>Model Interview Questions</p>
8.	<p>Appoint</p> <p>Decide who to appoint. This decision will be made by the incumbent and assisting interviewer. This is subject to the full completion of all satisfactory checks. The volunteer or worker will not commence in role until satisfactory references have been received, a completed Confidential Declaration Form has been submitted and the Disclosure and Barring Service process is complete. Any blemished DBS checks must be risk assessed by the DSA.</p>	<p>Model Appointment letter</p>
9.	<p>Probation Period</p> <p>Have a period of probation (6 months) for any paid role or a settling in period for volunteers and at the end of this period conduct a review.</p>	
10.	<p>Induct, Train and Support</p> <p>Induct new volunteers and paid workers, ensure supervision and support is in place and arrange attendance on Church of England modular safeguarding training as the role requires (see section 4 for the training requirements for key Parish roles).</p>	

7. Safeguarding Training¹⁰

The House of Bishop Safeguarding Policy states that the Church ‘*will train and equip church officers to have the confidence and skills they need to care and support children, young people and vulnerable adults and to recognise and respond to abuse.*’

The ‘Training and Development Framework’ outlines the core safeguarding training that is available from the diocese.

C0-Basic Awareness	Recommended for anyone who needs a basic level of awareness of safeguarding.
C1 - Foundation	Required for anyone who has safeguarding responsibilities/ contact with children and/ or vulnerable adults
C2 - Leadership	Required for anyone who has safeguarding leadership responsibilities/ Leading activities involving children and / or vulnerable adults
C3 - Clergy and Lay Ministers	Those holding a license, commission, authorisation, Permission to Officiate from a Bishop; Ordained or Lay
C4 Senior Staff	Senior staff who have key roles in safeguarding policy, strategy and practice
C5 Refresher	Anyone who has completed C1, C2 or C3 after 3 years

Who gets what training in the Parish?¹¹

Basic Safeguarding Awareness					
CO is a basic safeguarding awareness course that can be completed by any member of the congregation, to support awareness raising and a culture of support and vigilance in the Church. It can be undertaken on line at https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/login/index.php .					
However, it is recommended that the following roles are encouraged to complete it:					
Vergers, servers, welcomers, caretakers, refreshment helpers, shop staff, sidespersons, church watcher, flower arranger, administrative staff, bell ringers, choir members/music group members (inc. sound/AV) .					
Additional Core Training Requirements					
Role	CO	C1	C2	C3	C5
Incumbent and Clergy, including those that hold PTO	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Licensed Lay Ministers e.g. Readers	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Parish workers with children/ vulnerable adults (paid or volunteer)	✓	✓	X	X	✓

¹⁰ See the [Safeguarding Training and Development Practice Guidance](#) for further guidance

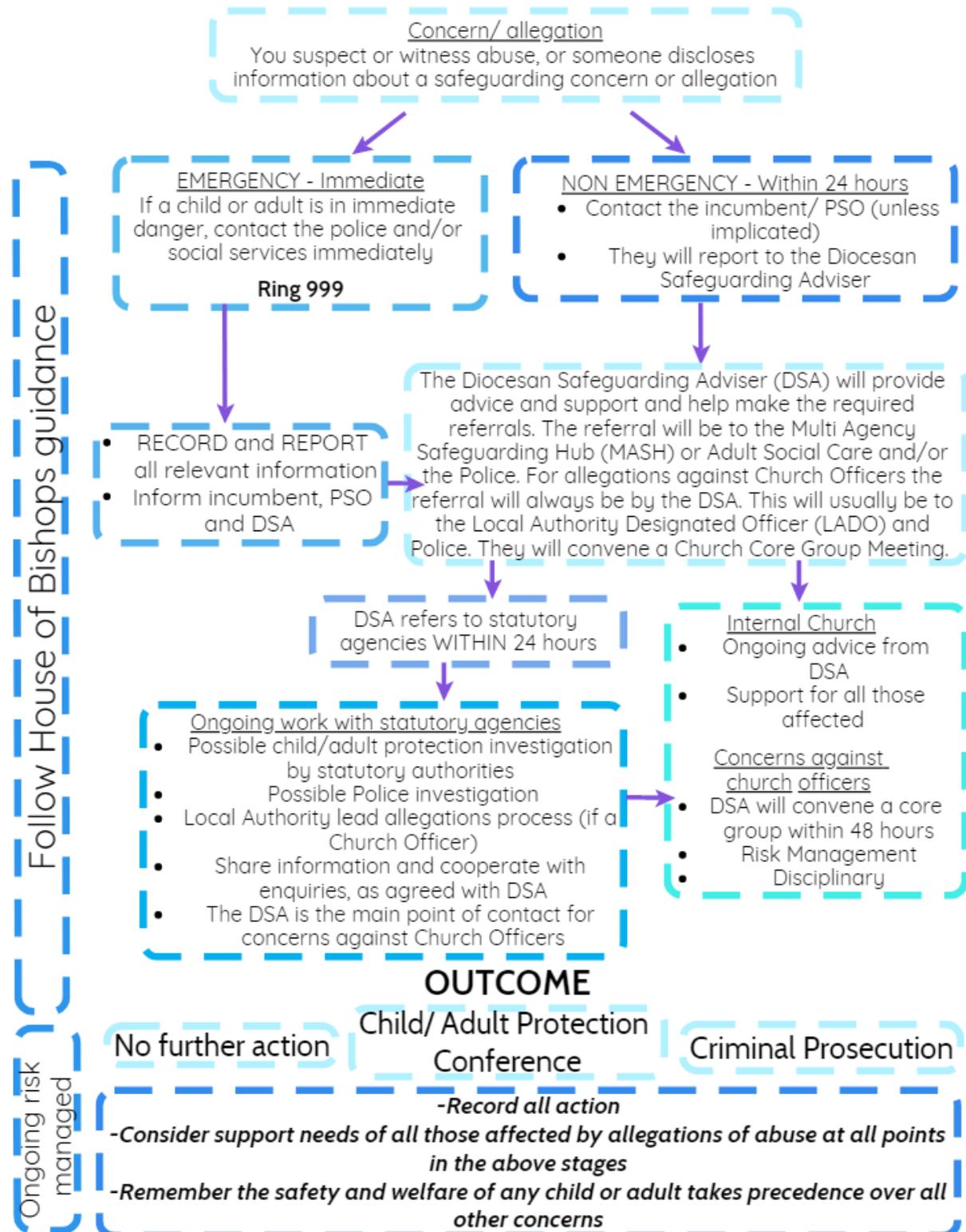
¹¹ Please note that this is not an exhaustive list but aims to cover the most common roles in a Parish

Leaders/Supervisors of work with children/vulnerable adults (paid or volunteer)	✓	✓	✓	X*	✓
Parish Safeguarding Officer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Church Operations Manager	✓	✓	X	X	✓
Church Wardens	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
PCC member	✓	X	X	X	X
PCC safeguarding Lead	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Youth and Children's Pastors	✓	✓	✓	X*	✓
Music Group leader/Choir Leaders	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Bell Tower Captains	✓	✓	✓	X	✓

* If ordained or licenced would be C3 instead of C2

8. Responding Promptly to Every Safeguarding Concern Allegation

8.1 Quick Guide



8.2 What to do if you are concerned about a child or adult:

If there is a concern that a child or adult is being abused (see sections 4 and 5 above for information on types of abuse):

1. Respond well to the victim/survivor, if it is a direct disclosure, to ensure they feel listened to and taken seriously. Explain what will happen next and check out support requirements. They should be informed that their identity and the identity of the respondent maybe shared with the statutory agencies, if there is any current risk to children. The concern or allegation should not be shared with anyone other than those who need to know (e.g. the statutory agencies and people occupying appropriate church roles) (see section 8.4 below).
2. **EMERGENCY:** If you believe a child or adult is in immediate danger of significant or serious harm, contact the emergency services on 999.
3. **NON- EMERGENCY:** Contact the Parish Safeguarding Officer or Incumbent, in the first instance. They **must** then contact the DSA. If neither of the two are available, contact the DSA directly. Any safeguarding concerns **must** be reported to the DSA **within 24 hours**.

If the concern arises outside of normal office hours you can contact the diocese out of hours service. Otherwise, for out of hours referrals, call the Emergency Social Work Team, or where urgent, the police. Always ensure the DSA is informed of the concerns and actions taken, and consulted regularly.

4. If the DSA or other colleagues are not available within 24 hours, don't delay. Contact Children's Social Care (this maybe called the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub ("MASH") or Adult Social care and/or police directly, then advise the Parish Safeguarding Officer or Incumbent, who will advise the DSA. If there are doubts about whether or not to make a referral and under what route, a consultation can be sought with MASH. Consultations and referrals would normally be initiated by the DSA.

If in doubt don't delay, seek advice from statutory agencies

5. Do not contact the respondent¹² or anyone who may be implicated in the allegation or disclosure, even if they would normally be contacted as part of the procedure, until advice has been sought from the DSA or statutory agencies.

¹² The person about whom a safeguarding concern or allegation has been made. Sometimes called the 'subject of concerns or allegations' or 'alleged perpetrator'.

6. Record the date and time of when the concerns arose and details of the concern or allegation. Keep it factual. Pass all original records, including rough notes, immediately to the DSA. Any copies of retained records should be kept secure and confidential. (Please see Recording Templates available in the online Parish Resource Pack).
7. The DSA will act in line with the House of Bishops guidance. They will offer advice, support and guidance and help to make the required referrals. If there is a risk of harm the concerns must be reported to the statutory agencies with 24 hours of the DSA receiving the concerns. This would be the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), for children or Adult Social Care and/or the Police.
8. There should be close communication between the DSA, PSO/Incumbent and the appropriate Archdeacon until the situation is resolved.

8.3 What to do if you are concerned that a church officer¹³ maybe abusing a child or adult¹⁴

If there is a concern that a church officer may be abusing or neglecting a child or adult, or the church officer's behaviour may not be following safer working practice (see section 12 below):

1. Respond well to the victim/survivor, if it is a direct disclosure, to ensure they are listened to and taken seriously. Explain to the victim/survivor what will happen next and check out support requirements. They should be informed that their identity and the identity of the respondent will be shared with the statutory agencies, if there is any current risk to children. The concern or allegation should not be shared with anyone other than those who need to know (e.g. the statutory agencies and people occupying appropriate church roles) (see section 8.4 below).
2. **EMERGENCY: If you believe a child or adult is in immediate danger of significant or serious harm, contact the emergency services on 999.**
3. **NON -EMERGENCY:** Contact the Parish Safeguarding Officer or Incumbent, in the first instance, if they are not implicated. The Parish Safeguarding Officer or Incumbent must then contact the DSA. Any safeguarding concern or allegation of abuse against a church officer must be reported to the DSA **within 24 hours**.

¹³ This could be priest, church warden, volunteer, youth group leader, reader, organist, choir leader, bell ringer, Sunday school leader, home visitor. Please note this list is not exhaustive.

¹⁴ Please see the [House of Bishops Responding to, assessing and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against Church Officers Practice Guidance](#) for further information.

4. Record the details of the concern or allegation. Always ask to do this and explain the importance of recording all information. Where it is not appropriate to take notes at the time (usually it will not be), make a written record as soon as possible afterwards or before the end of the day. The record should include details of information provided to that person as well as the information received. Record the time, date, location, persons present and how the concern or allegation was received, e.g. by telephone, face to face conversation, letter, etc. Always sign and date the record. (Please see Recording Templates available in the online Parish Resource Pack).
5. If the victim/survivor disagrees with the content of the note, any agreed changes can be made. If changes are not agreed (perhaps because they refer to additional matters that did not arise during the meeting), the person should be advised that their comments are noted and will be retained with the notes of the meeting.
6. Pass all original records, including rough notes, immediately to the DSA. Any copies of retained records should be kept secure and confidential.
7. Do not contact or inform the respondent or anyone who may be implicated in the concern or allegation, even if they would normally be contacted as part of the procedure.
8. The DSA will act in line with the House of Bishops guidance. They will offer advice, support and guidance and refer the concerns to the statutory agencies **within 24 hours**. This would be the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** and/or the **police**. The DSA will now take over the management of the safeguarding concern in conjunction with the Core Group¹⁵, (which will be convened **within 48 hours**) and Statutory agencies. There may also be a requirement for parish representatives to attend a subsequent Core Group(s). If there are doubts about the whether or not to make a referral and under what route, the DSA will seek advice form the LADO.

If in doubt don't delay, seek advice from statutory agencies

Please note the procedure is the same for non-recent abuse,

A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and adults, and respecting the rights of the person against whom an allegation is made. In such circumstances the welfare of the child, young person or adult must come first. The rights of the person against whom the allegation is made are important and must be given due weight, once the immediate safety and protection of the child, young person or vulnerable adult has been assured.

¹⁵ Every safeguarding concern or allegation involving a church officer should be managed by a defined core group, convened for the specific situation. The purpose of the group is to oversee and manage the response to a safeguarding concern or allegation in line with House of Bishops' policy and practice guidance.

8.4 Guidelines for Responding to a Person Disclosing Abuse

Listen and Respond

Do

- Take what is said seriously.
- Only use open questions (open questions begin with words like: who, what, when, where, why, how, describe and cannot be answered with 'yes' or 'no').
- Remain calm.
- Take into account the person's age and level of understanding – (it may be appropriate to ask if they mind you taking notes while they talk or at the end so you can check with them you have understood everything correctly - but only if it is appropriate).
- Offer reassurance that disclosing is the right thing to do.
- Establish only as much information as is needed to be able to tell your leader/ Parish Safeguarding Officer/ DSA and statutory authorities what is believed to have happened, when and where.
- Check out what the person hopes for.
- Tell the child or adult what you are going to do next.

Do Not

- Make promises that cannot be kept.
- Make assumptions or offer alternative explanations.
- Never promise the child or adult that you can keep a secret. Explain that information will be shared if children or any adult is at potential risk;
- Contact the person about whom allegations have been made.
- Do a medical examination

Record

- Make some very brief notes at the time and write them up in detail as soon as possible.
- Do not destroy your original notes in case they are required by the DSA or the statutory authorities.
- Record the date, time, place, words used and how they appeared to you. Record the actual words used, including any swear words or slang.
- Record facts and observable things, not your interpretations or assumptions.
- Don't speculate or jump to conclusions.

Report

- If there is immediate danger to a child/adult contact the police.
- Otherwise report to your local leader/safeguarding officer immediately.
- **Within 24 hours** the Parish reports the concerns to the DSA.
- The DSA will advise re reporting to statutory agencies **within 24 hours**.
- If there is any doubt seek advice from social services or the police.

8.5 Non-Recent Abuse

Safeguarding concerns or allegations may be about something that is going on now and/or something that may happen in the future (recent) or something that happened in the past (non-recent). Non-recent allegations must be treated as seriously as recent allegations. Research evidences that it may take up to 25 years for an adult to disclose sexual abuse that happened to them either as a child or younger adult. A victim/survivor needs to be aware that if the

alleged abuser is known to be still working with children in either a paid or voluntary capacity a referral to the statutory services must be made. The DSA will make this referral. See section 9 on support to victim/survivors.

Any safeguarding concern or allegation made against a member of the church who has died must also be reported to the DSA. This is to ensure that the information is formally logged on their respective data bases should others make allegations against the same person in the future, to enable reporting to the police, if required, and to respond to any civil compensation claim that may arise.

8.6 Domestic Abuse

The House of Bishops' policy states that '*The Church is committed to those who have been victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse in all its forms is contrary to the will of God and an affront to human dignity. All need to play their part in preventing or halting it.*' The welfare of the adult victim of domestic abuse is important, but where there are children in the family it must be understood that they too are victims of domestic abuse. Consideration of the child's welfare always comes first. In all circumstances, contact the DSA who will help clarify the issues and steps needed, which may involve contacting Children's Social Care. There may be a need for a risk assessment and for a Safeguarding Agreement to be put in place. The DSA will undertake this work in conjunction with the parish church and any statutory agencies.

What do you need to do in a Parish?¹⁶

- PCC to agree a parish domestic abuse statement including who to contact if there are concerns
- Appoint a named individual who is a point of contact for any advice and support. This may be the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO).
- Follow the process on how to respond to safeguarding concerns or allegation concerns.
- Support those in leadership positions, pastoral and safeguarding roles to engage in diocesan domestic abuse training.
- Consider the best place to display the domestic abuse statement including information about helplines and local services.
- Discuss domestic abuse in appropriate contexts such as marriage preparation.
- Challenge inappropriate comments and behaviour by church members.

Recommended good practice:

- Encourage leaders and those who preach to speak against domestic abuse in teaching, sermons, prayers and parish magazines - remember that many of the congregation may have a personal experience.
- Offer some awareness raising activities e.g. invite speakers from local domestic abuse agencies.
- Consider including activities around healthy relationships within activities for children and young people.

¹⁶ Section 1.5 of the House of Bishops Responding Well to Domestic Abuse Practice Guidance 2017

- Develop links with local domestic abuse organisations.
- Organise courses in parenting and confidence-building.

For further information see the House of Bishops Domestic Abuse Practice Guidance

8.7 Ministry of Deliverance

Concerns may be expressed that a child, young person or adult is troubled by or possessed by evil spirits or demons and that this may account for behavioural issues in the individual or be considered to justify harsh treatment by the family, guardians, friends or carers.

In any situation in which a member of the clergy, lay ministers or a member of the church community becomes aware that belief in demonic possession of any person is present and/or a request is made for deliverance ministry that involves a child, young person or vulnerable adult, they **must** contact the **DSA** in addition to the **Diocesan Deliverance Ministry Adviser**.

8.8 Recording, Data Protection and Information Sharing

Opening a Church Safeguarding Case File

Good record keeping is an important part of the safeguarding task. A record, called a case file, should be opened whenever a safeguarding concern or allegation occurs in a church. The record should include key contact details, dates of when the information became known and the nature of the concerns. The record should include ongoing actions with dates, other key documents on the case file (e.g. observation notes, reports, consent forms etc.) and the case closure date. Records should use straightforward language, be concise, and accurate so that they can be understood by anyone not familiar with the case. Please see the Parish Resource Pack for recording templates

Record Retention and Security

The safeguarding case files, whether electronic or paper, must be stored securely by the incumbent. This includes identified restricted access. Records in relation to safeguarding issues, even if they have not been proven, should be maintained in accordance with the Church's retention guidance. If the Incumbent moves from the church, the records should be passed to the new Incumbent; in the case of an interregnum this should be the archdeacon who should return the records to the next Incumbent once appointed. Please see the Parish Resource Pack for retention guidance.

Data Protection

The Data Protection Act 2018 came into force in May 2018. It contains the principles governing the use of personal data; that the information is used fairly, lawfully and transparently. The House of Bishops policy reminds us that there is nothing in Data Protection legislation that limits appropriate disclosure in order to protect a child, young person or adult who might be at risk. What matters is that our information sharing should be reasonable and proportionate.

Reporting Concerns about Adults

Referrals of suspected abuse are made to Adult Social Services and the police. For a person over 18 this should be done with their written consent unless there is a substantial public interest concern (see below) or the person does not have the capacity to make the decision.

The starting point is the presumption that an adult can give consent and has the mental capacity to do so. The provisions of the Mental Capacity Act are complex and questions and concerns about consent and mental capacity should always be discussed with the DSA.

Never make these decisions on your own. Safeguarding concerns should always be discussed with the DSA. This can be done, at least initially, without identifying the individual concerned both within the church and with the statutory services.

Substantial Public Interest Concern¹⁷

There are some circumstances in which sharing confidential information without consent is justified. This is where it is in the substantial public interest, and necessary for the purpose of:

- i. protecting an individual from neglect or physical, mental or emotional harm; or
- ii. protecting the physical, mental or emotional well-being of an individual

That is:

- When there is evidence or reasonable cause to believe that a child is experiencing or at risk of neglect or any type of harm.
- When there is evidence or reasonable cause to believe that an adult is experiencing or at risk of neglect or any type of harm, and unable to protect themselves.

For further information please see the online Parish Resource Pack
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Whistle Blowing

Paid staff, volunteers and members of the congregation should be encouraged to acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of unacceptable practice, performance or behaviour to the attention of the minister, church leadership team, Church Safeguarding Coordinator, DSA, archdeacon or, in certain circumstances, the bishop. Your diocese will have a Whistle Blowing Policy which should be available on the safeguarding page of the diocesan website.

¹⁷ Data Protection Act 2018

9. Caring Pastorally for Victims/Survivors of Abuse and Affected Others

The House of Bishops Safeguarding policy states that *'The Church will endeavour to offer care and support to all those that have been abused, regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred...Those who have suffered abuse within the Church will receive a compassionate response, be listened to and be taken seriously. Our first response to those who have suffered abuse, especially abuse within the church, should be compassionate; we must listen and take what we are hearing seriously.'*

Most churches are likely to have amongst their congregation children and young people who have been abused and/or adults who have experienced abuse, either as adults or when they themselves were children.

The pastoral care of the person who has been abused should be a priority. Responding well to a disclosure of abuse is essential to being able to build trust and support (see section 8.4 above). For some, just being able to talk to a trusted person about their experiences can be a powerful, healing event. However, some maybe seeking professional help. This may involve support to access local specialist services. Victims/survivors who are children or young people may require specialist support. If this is the case please contact the DSA.

No pressure or encouragement should be given to the victim/survivor by the church to forgive the respondent. This would be abusive in itself. It is for God to forgive the respondent, not the victim/survivor. For further information on Forgiveness and Reconciliation see www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/faith-and-order-commission

Further information on working with those who have been sexually abused can be found in House of Bishops "Responding Well to Those Who Have Been Sexually Abused" Practice Guidance 2011.

Support following alleged abuse by a church officer

All concerns or allegations of abuse by a church officer should be reported to the DSA. They will arrange for a **Support Person** to be offered to all alleged victims/survivors. The extent and limits of the role are set out in the House of Bishops Guidance¹⁸. What the Support Person offers will be agreed with the alleged victim/survivor, but it is likely they will:

- Listen to and represent the victim/survivor's pastoral needs.
- Identify any therapeutic or other needs, and offer choices as how these may be best met.
- Liaise with the statutory agencies to provide support to the victim/survivor.
- Record any meetings or contact they have with the victim/survivor.
- Share relevant information with the DSA.

¹⁸ See section 1.4 of 'Responding to, assessing and managing concerns or allegations against church officers 2017'

Victims/survivors who are children or young people may require specialist support. The DSA will normally seek advice from Children's Services in order to access support from a professional agency, as required.

Support for families of victims/survivors and for the parish is co-ordinated by the Core Group in conjunction with statutory agencies. This would involve discussion with the Parish Safeguarding Officer, Incumbent and archdeacon as appropriate.

In addition, dioceses have access to specialist support services for victims/survivors of abuse. This may be through a Diocesan Authorised Listener or a commissioned external service. The nature of any ongoing support needs to be agreed with the victim/survivor, support person and the DSA.

10. Caring Pastorally for Church Officers who are the Subject of Concerns or Allegations of Abuse (The Respondent) and Affected Others

10.1 Support for the respondent¹⁹

Support for the respondent is provided by a **Link Person**. All church officers who are the subject of concern will be offered a Link Person.

The statutory agencies, where involved, will inform the DSA about when they can tell the respondent an allegation has been made. It may be that the statutory agencies themselves inform the respondent as part of their own investigative practices i.e. where an arrest is necessary.

Where the statutory agencies are not involved, the Core Group will determine when and what the respondent should be told. This will normally be done by the diocesan bishop's nominated representative arranging a meeting with the respondent. At this meeting the respondent will be offered a Link Person and the supports needs of the respondent's family will be considered.

Within the extent and limits of the role set out in the above House of Bishops Guidance²⁰, what the Link Person offers will be agreed with the respondent, but it is likely they will:

- Attend meetings and keep the person up to date with the progress of their case;
- Help with access to advice and additional support;
- Record any meetings or contact with the respondent and sharing relevant information with the DSA.

For clergy or lay workers whose accommodation is provided by the Church, alternative temporary accommodation for the respondent may need to be considered, by the Diocese, to protect them and their families, and to help in withdrawal from their role during the investigation period, which may take many months to resolve.

¹⁹ The term 'respondent' refers to the person about whom a safeguarding concern or allegation has been made. Sometimes called the 'subject of concerns or allegations' or 'alleged perpetrator'. This should not be confused with the term 'respondent' that is used under the CDM to describe the person who is the subject of a complaint.

²⁰ See section 1.5 'Responding to, assessing and managing concerns or allegations against church officers 2017'

10.2 Support when the respondent is a child or young person

Children or young people will require specialist support. In consultation with the DSA, advice should be sought from Children's Services and the child or young person should be referred to a professional agency qualified to provide such support.

10.3 Support to parishes and others affected by safeguarding concerns or allegations

When a member of clergy leaves a parish in which they have lived and worked for some time, there is usually a period of notice during which they can take their leave and parishioners can say their goodbyes. The pastoral relationship between the respondent and parishioners can be very close, so when it is ending it is to be expected there will be some sense of loss and sadness; but there is also an opportunity to mark their departure.

When someone in a position of office or ministry must step aside at short notice or is suspended because of a safeguarding concern or allegation, a crisis arises for them; but also for the parishioners who have had no warning. The feelings that can arise for parishioners in these circumstances can be very varied, and can include defensiveness about the allegation or the respondent, shock, disappointment, anger and confusion. People can feel abandoned, especially if they had been working closely with that person in some element of parish life.

The Core Group will advise the DSA, in close liaison with the archdeacon, as to who should support the affected parish.

During the period of investigation, which may last for many months, the information that can be shared with congregants or parishes will be limited. Advice and guidance should always be sought from the DSA and the archdeacon.

11. Responding to those that may Pose a Present Risk in Congregations²¹

The House of Bishops Safeguarding policy states '*The Church, based on the message of the gospel, opens its doors to all. It will therefore endeavour to offer pastoral care and support to any member of the church community whom may present a known risk*'.

This means that there are likely to be those with criminal convictions for sexual offences and other forms of abuse attending Church. In addition, there may be those who do not have convictions or cautions but where there are sound reasons for considering that they still might pose a present risk to others. Where people may pose a risk to others their position in a congregation or community will need to be carefully and sensitively considered/assessed to decide whether they pose a present risk to others and to put in place arrangements to ensure that these risks are mitigated. In these circumstances it is not only about monitoring individuals but offering support to lead a fulfilled life. As such the church has an important role contributing to the prevention of future abuse.

²¹ Please see the [House of Bishops Responding to, assessing and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against Church Officers Practice Guidance](#) for further information, if required

Some examples of the risk that individuals may pose is the risk to children, young people and adults are:

- **Sexual Harassment:** Unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature. Examples might include the making of sexually degrading remarks, text messages with sexual content and physical behaviour, including unwanted touching.
- **Child Sexual Exploitation:** A type of sexual abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity.
- **Sexual offences – against both adults and children:** This may include internet offences or contact offences (such as sexual abuse of a child under the age of consent / sexual assault and rape).
- **Financial abuse:** targeting of vulnerable adults for financial gain, for example, asking for money, the acceptance of large 'gifts' or offering to do a job for someone at an extortionate rate of pay.

11.1 Take action

Always contact the DSA as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours, if you learn any of the following people worship in your church:

1. Anyone placed on the sex offenders register, and/or who is barred from working with children or adults by the Disclosure and Barring Service.
2. Anyone who admits to being an abuser including non-current abuse, or who is a potential risk to adults in the church.
3. Anyone who is subject to an investigation for suspected abuse, or suspended from their usual role.
4. Anyone who may pose a risk to other church members irrespective of their criminal status.

Category (4) may include a person in relation to whom:

- An allegation of abuse against a child or adult has been investigated, but the matter has not proceeded to court, or the person has been acquitted, or the matter is currently the subject of proceedings in the criminal or civil courts but may still pose a risk.
- A complaint or grievance has been received alleging inappropriate behaviour, which is not criminal.
- There have been concerns about the person's alleged abusive behaviour to a previous or a present partner.

If the DSA is made aware by any other source of any person in the above categories who is intending to or is worshipping at a local parish church, s/he will notify the Incumbent in the first instance.

The DSA will determine the appropriate action to be taken to best safeguard the parish and its church community, based on the particular facts and circumstances of each case. They will undertake a risk assessment and the formation of a risk management plan known as a Safeguarding Agreement (**see online Parish Resource pack for the template for a Safeguarding Agreement**).

The process will involve the person posing a risk, and usually the incumbent, churchwarden, Parish Safeguarding Officer and, if involved, statutory agencies i.e. police, National Probation Service and Children's Social Care. Who is involved will depend on the case. The Safeguarding Agreement will be periodically monitored and reviewed.

If a person is assessed as posing a risk to children or adults, the DSA, together with any statutory agencies involved, will support the parish to:

- Form a small group of people to offer pastoral support, friendship and to monitor the person posing a risk.
- Maintain the highest levels of confidentiality unless there is a breach of the agreement and it is necessary to inform others to protect a child.
- Require the person to worship elsewhere if his/her victim or members of the victim's family worship in the same church.
- Ensure the person posing a risk is never offered any official role or office in the church or allowed to take up such a role, for example that of churchwarden, the leading of services, or any in which a child or vulnerable adult may, as a result, place trust in that person.
- Consider whether with the person's agreement and that of any statutory authorities involved, the congregation should be informed.
- Meet with the person posing a risk and contribute to the drafting of a Safeguarding Agreement, setting out the parameters of his/her behaviour in the church setting.

The Safeguarding Agreement may include the following elements:

- Attend designated services or meetings only.
- Sit apart from children.
- Stay away from areas of the building where children or vulnerable adults meet.
- Attend a house group where there are no children or vulnerable adults.
- Decline hospitality where there are children or vulnerable adults.
- Never be alone with children or vulnerable adults.
- Never work or be part of a mixed group with children or vulnerable adults.
- Take no role or office in the church which gives him or her status or authority as others may deem that person to be trustworthy.

Failure to sign the agreement should result in the individual being refused access to the church premises for any reason and to any church activities. Should the agreement be breached, the police and other relevant agencies will be informed.

12. A Safe Environment for Children

The House of Bishops Safeguarding policy statement states that ‘*The Church will strive to create and maintain environments that are safer for all, that promote well-being, that prevent abuse, and that create nurturing, caring conditions within the Church for children, young people and vulnerable adults...The Church will strive to support all church officers to adhere to safer working good practice and to challenge the abuse of power.*’

12.1 Code of Safer Working Practice with Children

A **Model Code of Safer Working Practice** is provided in the **Parish Resource Pack**. All those working on behalf of the parish should be aware of this.

You should:

- Treat all children with respect and dignity.
- Ensure that your own language, tone of voice, and body language is respectful.
- Always aim to work with or within sight of another adult.
- Ensure another adult is informed if a child needs to be taken to the toilet. Toilet breaks should be organised for young children.
- Ensure that children know who they can talk to if they need to speak to someone about a personal concern.
- Respond warmly to a child who needs comforting but make sure there are other adults around.
- If any activity requires physical contact, ensure that the child and parents are aware of this and its nature beforehand.
- Administer any First Aid with others around.
- Obtain consent for any photographs/videos to be taken, shown or displayed ([see model template](#)).
- Record any incidents of concern and give the information to your group leader, sign and date the record ([See model template](#)).
- Always share concerns about a child and the behaviour of another worker with your group leader and/or Parish Safeguarding Officer.

You should not:

- Invade a child’s privacy whilst washing and toileting.
- Use any form of physical punishment.
- Be sexually suggestive about or to a child even in fun.
- Scapegoat, ridicule or reject a child or group.
- Permit abusive peer activities e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying.
- Show favoritism to any one child or group.
- Allow a child to involve you in excessive attention seeking that is overtly physical or sexual in nature.
- Give lifts to children you are supervising, on their own or your own (unless there are exceptional circumstances e.g. parents fail to collect a child and no other arrangements can be made to take a child home. In such circumstances, the

circumstances and your decision must be recorded and shared with an appropriate person at the earliest opportunity).

- Smoke tobacco in the presence of children.
- Share sleeping accommodation with children.
- Arrange social occasions with children (other than events which also include adult family members/carers) outside organised group occasions.
- Allow unknown adults access to children. Visitors should always be accompanied by a known person.
- Allow strangers to give children in your group lifts.

12.2 Children's Activities

Church groups working with children need to ensure good practice standards across a wide range of areas including: recruitment of group leaders; DBS checking; staffing ratios; suitability of premises; health and safety arrangements; and facilities for children with special needs. All model templates can be found in the Parish Resource Pack.

The minimum staffing levels for groups should be as follows:

0 – 2 years	1 person for every 3 children	1:3
2 – 3 years	1 person for every 4 children	1:4
4 – 8 years	1 person for every 6 children ²²	1:6
9-12 years	1 person for every first 12 children then 1 more for every extra 12 children	1:12
13- 18 years	1 person for the first 12 children then 1 more for every extra 12 children	1:12

Each group should have at least two workers, if possible with one male and one female. Staff ratios for all groups should always be based on a risk assessment. For example, staffing numbers would need to be increased for outdoor activities and more so if that activity is considered higher risk or potentially dangerous or when children with disabilities or special needs are involved. Practice guidance on offsite children's activities, including residential activities, is available on the safeguarding section of the diocesan website.

For all groups and activities:

- Undertake a health and safety risk assessment- [see model templates \(online Parish Resource pack\)](#)
- A register should be kept and be available at all group meetings.

²² Please note that for mixed age groups you must have the right level of supervision based on the average age of the majority of the group. For children aged eight you need 1 adult for every 10 children then 1 more for every extra 10 children. The above ratio is based on NSPCC guidance.

- A registration form should be completed for every child or young person who attends groups or activities which should include up to date information on parents' contact numbers, medical information (e.g. allergies) and any special needs- [see model templates](#).
- A First Aid kit should be available on any premises that are used by children.
- An accident and incident logbook should be available, and all accidents recorded. The logbook should be stored in a secure place- [see model templates](#).
- Any significant incidents should be recorded (e.g. a fight between children).
- There should be access to a telephone.
- In premises where children's groups are held the Childline and Family Lives telephone numbers should be displayed.
- Parents must sign a consent form before children are transported in a private car, children are taken off site for activities and before any photography or images are taken- [see model templates](#).
- When taking children offsite a detailed programme and list of contacts should be left with someone in the church.
- Activities planned to take place away from church premises should have the agreement of the church leadership in order to be covered by insurance.

Many of these items are equally applicable to groups involving vulnerable adults.

12.3 Touch

Sympathetic attention, humour, encouragement and appropriate physical contact are needed by children as part of their coming to understand human relationships. Some physical contact with children, particularly younger children, is wholly appropriate. The following guidelines regarding touching are suggested:

- Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be in response to a child's needs and not related to the worker's needs.
- Touch should be age appropriate, welcome and generally initiated by the child, not the worker.
- Avoid any physical activity that is, or could be construed as, sexually stimulating to the adult or the child.
- Allow the child to determine the degree of physical contact with others except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. when they need medical attention).
- Ensure that workers at all levels take responsibility for monitoring one another in the area of physical contact with children. They should be encouraged to challenge another worker if necessary. Concerns about possible abuse should always be reported.

13. A Safe Environment for Adults

13.1 Code of Safer Working Practice with Adults

You should:

- Treat all adults with respect and dignity.
- Ensure that your own language, tone of voice, and body language is respectful.
- Record any incidents of concern and give the information to your group leader, sign and date the record ([see model template](#)).
- Always share concerns about an adult and the behaviour of another worker with your group leader and/or Safeguarding Rep.

You should not:

- Invade an adult's privacy whilst washing and toileting.
- Use any form of physical punishment or restraint (apart from appropriate use of car seat belts).
- Be sexually suggestive about or to an adult even in fun.
- Scapegoat, ridicule or reject an adult or group.
- Permit abusive peer activities e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying.
- Show favouritism to any one adult or group.
- Allow an adult to involve you in excessive attention seeking that is overtly physical or sexual in nature.
- Allow unknown adults access to adults deemed at risk of harm. Visitors should always be accompanied by a known person.
- Allow strangers to give adults in your group lifts.

13.2 Visiting Adults

Visiting vulnerable adults in their homes is an essential element of many church officers' roles. Many parishioners will be well known to the church officer and where there have been no previous concerns the level of risk to the church officer or parishioner during visits will usually be low. However, unexpected circumstances can be encountered, some of which may place a church officer at risk. For example, the unexpected presence in the home of a relative or friend with a history of violence or threatening behaviour. Unfortunately, case histories also show that a parishioner may be at risk from a church officer. For these reasons it is very important for parish churches to ensure their church officers and parishioners are as safe as they can be, and that there is accountability and transparency in the manner in which church officers engage in lone working or visits to residential homes.

13.3 Risk Assessments

- Always undertake a risk assessment for a first visit whether you know the person to be visited or not ([see model risk assessment checklist](#)).
- If there are any concerns or risks known before a visit is made, you are advised always to undertake a risk assessment using the checklist below. In these circumstances, give careful consideration to whether the visit is absolutely necessary, or whether you should be accompanied by another adult.

- Always consider undertaking a risk assessment periodically in relation to all parishioners you visit.
- Keep a written record of all risk assessments undertaken.
- Use a risk assessment checklist.

To assure the person you are visiting of their safety, and for your own as a church officer, and irrespective of whether a risk assessment has been made:

- Visiting in twos may be advisable, especially if the adult lacks capacity, as well as taking a mobile phone.
- Do not call unannounced; call by appointment, if appropriate telephoning the person just before visiting.
- Be clear about what support can be offered to the adult if they ask for help with particular problems and refer back to the church if uncertain.
- Do not make referrals to any agency that could provide help without the adult's permission, and ideally encourage them to set up the contact.
- Never offer "over the counter" remedies to people on visits or administer prescribed medicines, even if asked to do so.
- Do not accept any gifts from adults other than token items, to avoid misunderstandings or subsequent accusations from the person or their family. If someone wants to make a donation to the church, put it in an envelope, mark it on the outside as a donation and obtain a receipt from the Treasurer.
- Pastoral visitors are encouraged to note the date when they visit people, to report back about their visit to the agreed co-ordinator and say what is concerning or going well. They will report safeguarding concerns to the Parish Safeguarding Officer and/or Incumbent or directly to the DSA if they are not available.

Further guidance can be found on working with vulnerable audits in the Parish Resource Pack

14. Use of Social Media

14.1 What is social media?

Social media sites enable users to create and share content and keep in touch with other users. They include maintaining a profile page on a networking site such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat; writing or commenting on a blog, whether it is your own or the blog of another person; taking part in discussions on web forums or message boards. For many, especially young people, using social media is an extension of physical face to face relationships. It is therefore important that churches also engage with their community and worshippers through these platforms. However, there are risks.

14.2 Risks

Forming inappropriate relationships

Online conversations and private messaging can both lead to a level of intimacy that in face to face relationships we would naturally guard against. This is particularly important with

members of the opposite sex, children and young people and vulnerable adults. Always ensure online content cannot be perceived as sexual grooming.

Saying things you should not – with increased impact

Social media is public, permanent and has published status, it is not a confidential system. However, people have a tendency online to be indiscrete about themselves, other people and, in our context, the Christian faith and Church. Other people may view these postings and share them widely. Some comments may be illegal and identified as hate crimes, libelous, or defamatory remarks. Our online behaviour and communication could be something that lets down the reputation of the church in the eyes of the community. In addition, electronic and online communication can be used to breach confidentiality and spread gossip. **Always think before you post.**

Blurring of public ministry/private life boundaries

The distinction between public ministry and private life is difficult to draw. This is no different online. There are risks associated with personal opinions being seen as public statements, a church officer's private life being invaded, and the difficulties of detaching from their work. You are advised to draw clear boundaries around your social media usage associated with your private life and use different social media for public ministry (e.g. only use a Facebook page, Twitter or blogs for public ministry, while keeping a Facebook profile for private life).

Bullying, harassment and malicious accusations

Social media can be used to bully and harass others and is a forum for malicious accusations. Young people are particularly vulnerable in this regard.

Grooming and impersonation

There are clear dangers particularly for children and young people from those who use social media as a means of grooming.

14.3 Role of the PCC

The PCC should always approve the use of social media by the church, and which social media should be used. Where there are Facebook or similar online groups set up on the church's behalf the PCC should ensure there is a *named person* to whom all workers are accountable.

The named person is a church officer, who should be a worker colleague or supervisor, and should be aware of the account name and password so that they can at any time log onto the account to monitor the communications. The named person should be proactive in fulfilling this role.

Communications should be shared with the named person. Church officers remain bound by professional rules of confidentiality. Where there is concern that a young person is at risk of abuse, or they themselves pose a risk of abuse to others, safeguarding procedures must always be followed.

14.4 Consents

Church officers should always ask parents and guardians for their written consent to the following:

- Use of photographs of young people from activities or events in official church publications, or from the church's social media, website and displays.
- Email communication with young people.
- Use of telephone, text message and other messaging services between young people and staff.
- Young people connecting to the church's social media pages.

14.5 Privacy

The lines between public ministry in the church and private life can become particularly blurred in social media. Always assume that everything you write is permanent and can be viewed by anyone at any time; that everything can be traced back to you personally as well as to your colleagues or the church.

14.6 Facebook and Social Networking Sites

The safest option to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults is not to use a personal Facebook account and profile for your work with them. You are advised to keep the church or diocesan group account and profile separate from your personal social media account. In other words, create a separate church or diocesan group page related to your church role for your communications with young people and vulnerable adults. When setting up a Facebook page for your church, ensure young people and their carers can easily find out who is responsible for the content. Be cautious about accepting friend requests from church members and do not accept them from children and young people.

14.7 Mobile Phones

Wherever possible, church workers should be supplied with a mobile phone dedicated for work purposes. This allows for the phone to be switched off outside working hours, and for usage to be accountable. This means that the work phone number is the only number that young people are given and the worker's personal number remains private. Texts that raise concerns should be saved and passed on to the named person. Conversations raising concerns should be discussed as soon as possible.

For further information on 'Social media dos and don'ts' and 'Sexting' see the **Parish Resource Pack**.

15. Further help and guidance

Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers are qualified and experienced safeguarding practitioners who provide advice and guidance to churches whenever necessary. DSAs are available to the clergy, Parish Safeguarding Officers and all in Parish Churches to give advice on specific and general safeguarding concerns, worries or procedures.

Helplines

- **NSPCC** - For adults concerned about a child - **0808 800 5000**
- **ChildLine** - For children and young people - **0800 1111**
- Action on **Elder Abuse** helpline - **0808 808 8141**

- 24-hour National **Domestic Violence** Helpline - **0808 2000 247**
- **NAPAC** Offer support and advice to adult survivors of childhood abuse - **0808 801 0331**
- **Stop It Now** – preventing child sexual abuse **0808 1000 900**
- **Cruse** – bereavement helpline **0808 808 1677**

Some sources of support for victims and families of abuse

THE SURVIVORS TRUST <http://thesurvivorstrust.org/>

SAFELINE <https://www.safeline.org.uk/what-can-friends-and-family-members-do-to-support-survivors-of-sexual-abuse/>

SUPPORT LINE http://www.supportline.org.uk/problems/rape_sexual-assault.php

VICTIM SUPPORT <https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/crime-info/types-crime/childhood-abuse>

Websites

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.elderabuse.org.uk

www.womensaid.org.uk

www.ageuk.org.uk

www.restoredrelationships.org

www.barnardos.org.uk

www.stopitnow.org.uk

www.spiritualabuse.com

www.scie.org.uk

www.modernslavery.co.uk

www.ceop.police.uk

All model templates etc. in this handbook can be found in the Parish Safeguarding Resource Pack.

All House of Bishops Safeguarding Policy and Guidance can be found [here](#).

In addition, please also see the safeguarding pages of your diocese website.

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