



Parochial Church Council (PCC) members – Safeguarding Responsibilities

Parochial Church Council (PCC) and the Incumbent¹

The PCC² 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 1956³.

The PCC 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 the need to register with the Charity Commission, unless their annual income is over £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.

DBS Checks

Where a PCC Member is a trustee of a charity the role is eligible for a DBS Check:

- Enhanced: As trustees of a charity that works with children or adults at risk

If the PCC does not oversee activities involving working with children or adults at risk then the role of PCC Member is not eligible for a DBS Check.

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

¹ The incumbent may be called the vicar, rector, parson and for the purposes of this document will also include a priest-in-charge.

² Any reference to the responsibilities and duties of the PCC applies to each member of the PCC, "all PCC members must share in the oversight... every member of the PCC is the trustee of a charity... The PCC... have a duty of care to ensure the protection of the vulnerable [children and adults at risk of abuse and neglect] within their church community.

³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/Eliz2/4-5/3/contents>

...under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 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 will include both policy and practice guidance). A duty to have 'due regard' to guidance means that the person under the duty [including PCC Members] 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 PCC and the incumbent jointly 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';⁴
- The House of Bishops' and diocesan safeguarding policies and practice guidance⁵, while being responsive to local parish requirements.

Appoint:

- At least one appropriately experienced designated parish safeguarding officer (PSO)⁶ to work with the incumbent and PCC:
 - This PSO should be a lay person. The PSO cannot be the incumbent;
 - The PSO may also be the DBS administrator for church officers who work with children or vulnerable adults but if not, the PCC should appoint another individual;
 - The PSO should be supported, trained and given a copy of the parish safeguarding policy and procedures.
- 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 below).

Safer Recruit, Support and Train:

- Ensure that all church officers⁷ who work with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults are:
 - recruited following the House of Bishops' Safer Recruitment practice guidance⁸;

⁴ <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/cofe-policy-statement.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/safeguarding-resources/#policies>

⁶ 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.

⁷ A "Church Officer" is anyone appointed/elected by or on behalf of the Church to a post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid.

- aware of and work to House of Bishops' safeguarding guidance (includes both policies and practice guidance);
- attend diocesan safeguarding training⁹ 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;
- Provide access to a safeguarding handbook¹⁰.

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 (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 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 parish¹¹;
- 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

⁸ https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/safeguarding%20safer_recruitment_practice_guidance_2016.pdf

⁹ <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/safeguarding-training/>

¹⁰ Please note this may be a Diocesan Handbook and/or the House of Bishops' Handbook that will be available in due course

¹¹ Whether the PSO is a member of the PCC is up to local determination. At a minimum they should report regularly to it.

on progress and a statement as to whether or not the PCC has complied with the duty to have “due regard” to the House of Bishops’ guidance in relation to safeguarding.

Hire out church premises:

- Any hire agreement with any person/body wishing to hire church premises must contain a provision whereby the person/body hiring the premises agrees to comply with the relevant safeguarding guidance issued by the House of Bishops and the diocese¹²;
- 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 guidance. 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.

Further information:

Guidance regarding Parish Safeguarding Responsibilities¹³ is available on the Diocese Website. Further guidance and templates¹⁴ for Parishes to use in respect of safeguarding are also available on the Diocese website. Should PCCs and PCC members require advice and guidance regarding the safeguarding responsibilities associated with their role please contact the Diocese Safeguarding Team.

¹² <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/church-building-hire-agreements/>

¹³ <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/parish-safeguarding-responsibilities/>

¹⁴ <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/PSO-resources/>