

WHAT TO DO IF – A PERSON POSING A RISK HAS ASKED TO, OR HAS, JOINED MY CHURCH

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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 reasons for considering that they still might pose a potential risk to others.

This is not an uncommon situation and many churches across the country welcome convicted offenders into their fellowship as well as those who pose a potential risk to others but have not been convicted.

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 them support to lead a fulfilled life. As such the church has an important role contributing to the prevention of future abuse.

If you become aware that a person who poses or may pose a risk wishes to join your church, please contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory (DSA) Team immediately and they will help lead the process.

The DSA team will undertake a risk assessment and manage the development of a Risk Management Plan, known as 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 by the DSA team in collaboration with others.

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, young person or vulnerable adult.
- 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 allow them to contribute to the drafting of a Safeguarding Agreement, setting out the parameters of his/her behaviour in the church setting.

Should the respondent refuse to sign the agreement the DSA will advise the parish and liaise with the police and other relevant agencies, as required, to seek a resolution. Should the agreement be breached, then the DSA must be informed immediately who will liaise with the statutory agencies, as required.

Discuss your concerns with the:

- Parish / Benefice Safeguarding Officer (unless they are subject of the concern) or
- A member of the clergy (unless they are subject of the concerns) they must contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) or Assistant DSA.
- DSA or Assistant DSA directly

Remember: If you are an incumbent or PSO and you are managing a safeguarding concern regarding a person who may pose a risk, or have been contacted directly about a person who may pose a risk, to let the DSA team know what has happened download and complete a concern form from www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/church-resources-safeguarding/what-to-do-if- and email it to Bev Huff or at: bev.huff@peterborough-diocese.org.uk