



## **Safeguarding Responsibilities of the PCC and Incumbent**

(November 2023)

**The PCC is the main decision maker of a parish. Its members are clergy, churchwardens and others elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) of the parish. Its powers and duties are defined by legislation and can principally be found in the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956.**

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; those with an annual income of more than £100,000 need to register with the Charity Commission. Therefore, every member of a PCC is also a charity trustee. As a charity, the PCC must comply with the Charity Commission guidance and legislation in relation to charities, including Serious Incident Reporting.

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

The PCC and the incumbent have a duty of care to ensure the protection of the vulnerable in their church community. In terms of safeguarding, with the incumbent the PCC will:



- **Promote:**

A safer church for all in the church community, and ensure there is a plan in place to raise awareness of, promote training and ensure that safeguarding is taken seriously by all those in the church community.

- **Adopt:**

The House of Bishops' [Promoting a Safer Church](#) safeguarding policy statement, the House of Bishop's safeguarding [Policies and Practice Guidance](#) while being responsive to local parish requirements;

- **Appoint:**

At least one (or a team of) appropriately experienced **parish safeguarding officer (PSO)** to work with the incumbent and PCC. This PSO should be a lay person. They must not be the incumbent or incumbent's spouse. The PSO may also be the DBS validator but if not, the PCC should appoint another individual. The PSO is not required to be a member of the PCC. If not the PCC should appoint one PCC member to be a designated safeguarding link. The role responsibilities for the PSO are available on the diocesan website [Know Your Safeguarding Role](#).

**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 and are described in the [Roles and Responsibilities Practice Guidance](#) 2017.



- **Safely Recruit, Support and Train:**

Ensure that all church officers who work with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults:

- Are recruited following the House of Bishop's Safer Recruitment practice guidance.
- Are aware of and work to House of Bishop's safeguarding guidance including the [Code of Practice](#).
- Complete the correct level of diocesan safeguarding training at least every three years; all PCC members must complete the following national church modules, accessed online at <https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/>
  - Basic Awareness
  - Foundation (refresh every 3 years)
  - Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse (refresh every 3 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 parish policy statement** of adoption of the House of Bishops'

[Promoting a Safer Church](#) policy statement . The parish statement of policy adoption should be signed on behalf of the PCC and noted on the Parish Dashboard.

**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.

**Details of safeguarding arrangements** on the parish website. We



recommend that the minimum information required would be details of a specific point of contact within the parish (this must include the Incumbent and may include the PSO and a link to the diocesan website).

You could provide a link to the statement of safeguarding policy with the option to redact the contact details of the PSO to protect privacy. You may in addition wish to include a link to the Safeguarding Poster which you can edit for parish use.

The [Parish Safeguarding Posters](#) also provide emergency contacts specific to your area and should be edited to include your parish safeguarding contact details and clearly displayed on your church premises and uploaded to your church website.

- **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 Advisor (DSA); Report all safeguarding concerns or allegations 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;

Comply with all data protection legislation especially concerning storing information about any paid/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.



- **Reporting Serious Incidents:**

As charity trustees, PCCs are responsible for reporting all “Serious Incidents” to the Charity Commission. (See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity>.) As outlined above, the PSO will work with the DSA in response to safeguarding allegations. Where there is a need to make a Safeguarding Serious Incident Report (SIR) to the Charity Commission, the DSA will support and advise the PCC on completing such a report.

Following consultation between the Charity Commission and the Church of England, updated [Safeguarding Serious Incident Reporting \(SIR\) Guidance](#) took effect from March 2021. This supersedes the previous guidance issued within the Diocese of Guildford for reporting SIRs by PCCs.

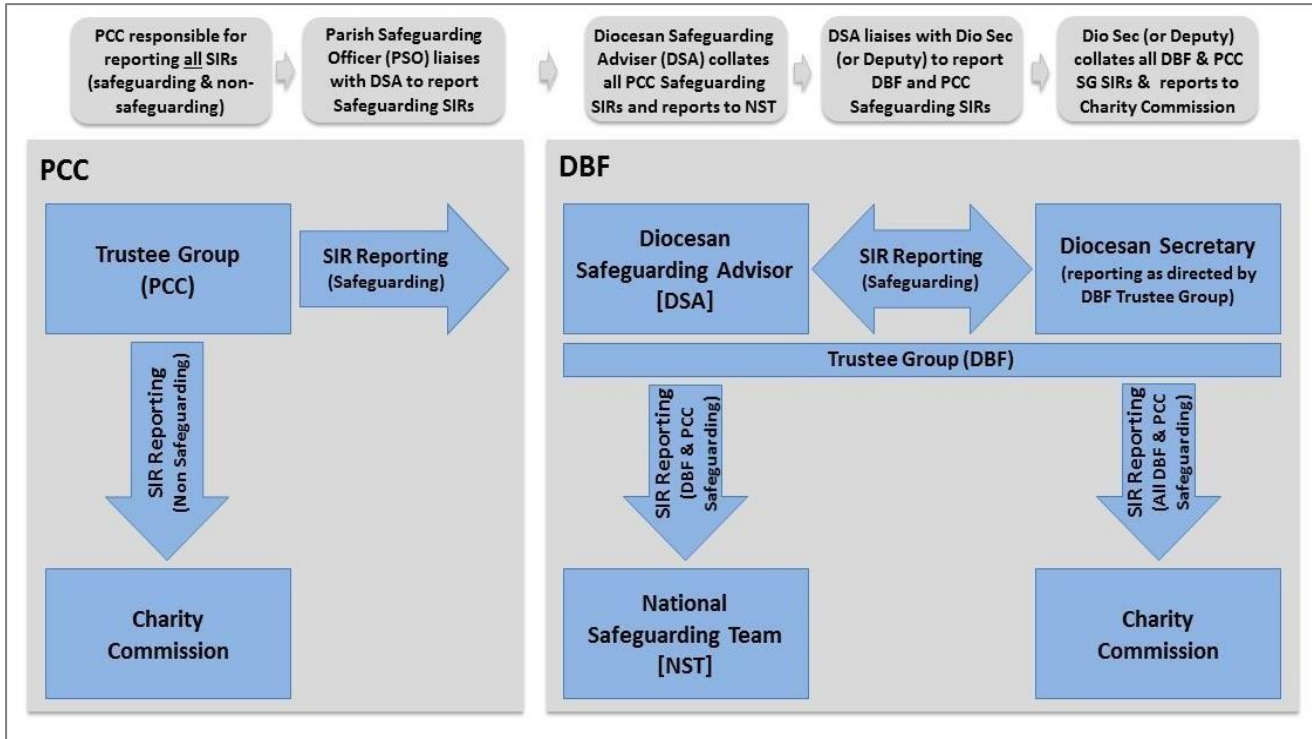
The new guidance provides template forms to support the delegation of trustee responsibilities for SIR reporting to the Charity Commission.

For PCCs the following delegations are recommended:

- delegation to a subset of named PCC trustees (Trustee Group) to ensure any decisions relating to the reporting of Serious Incidents to the charity commission is fulfilled. Whilst the national guidance doesn’t say this, it is recommended in Guildford that this be the Church Wardens and Incumbent.
- delegation to the Parish Safeguarding Officer for reporting and liaison with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSA) on behalf of the Trustee Group.
- delegation to the DSA for reporting safeguarding Serious Safeguarding Incidents to the Charity Commission, on behalf of the Trustee Group.
- delegation to the DSA for sending copies of any Serious Incident reports submitted to the Charity Commission on behalf of the PCC’s trustees to the National Safeguarding Team



The following diagram shows how the Safeguarding SIR guidance and associated reporting will operate practically in the Diocese of Guildford.





Members of each PCC (via the Trustee Group) remain responsible for their own SIR reporting, albeit that reporting of Safeguarding SIRs to the Charity Commission is via the DBF through their Parish Safeguarding Officer and the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA), rather than direct to the Charity Commission. Each PCC will need to formally delegate the responsibility for reporting of Safeguarding SIRs to a Trustee Group, their Parish Safeguarding Officer and the DSA for which there are template forms provided on the [Parish Resources Website](#). The PCC members (via the Trustee Group) will remain responsible for reporting non safeguarding SIRs direct to the Charity Commission. If in any doubt, the PCC Trustee Group should consult the Registry to ensure that a non Safeguarding SIR is completed and submitted appropriately.

The DSA will collate the PCC Safeguarding SIR reports with any DBF Safeguarding SIR and liaise with the Diocesan Secretary (or Deputy acting for the Diocesan Secretary), who will ensure that these are included in the DBF reporting of SIRs (including non-safeguarding SIRs) to the Charity Commission. The DBF Trustee Group will be consulted to ensure any decisions relating to the reporting of Serious Incidents to the charity commission are fulfilled. This reporting will normally be done as a bulk report every 6 months, unless a particular incident is of significance and determined by the Trustee Group as requiring individual incident reporting.

The DSA and Diocesan Secretary (or Deputy acting for the Diocesan Secretary), in consultation with the DBF Trustee Group, will evaluate whether there is a need to include a Safeguarding SIR in relation to a partner organisation. A written record of the decision and reasons will be retained.

The DSA will ensure that a copy of the Safeguarding SIR report (and any follow up) sent to the Charity Commission is also sent to the National Safeguarding Team.



- **Review and Report Progress:**

The PSO should regularly report on safeguarding in the parish. Safeguarding should be a standing agenda item at each PCC meeting. At the APCM the PCC should provide an annual report in relation to safeguarding. In the PCC's annual report will be a statement which reports on progress and a statement as to whether or not the PCC has complied with the duty to have "due regard" to the House of Bishops' guidance in relation to safeguarding.

The Parish Dashboard evidences your safeguarding arrangements and can generate an agenda for key action points for the PCC to consider.

### **Disclosure Barring Services (DBS) check**

If your parish runs activities for children and/or vulnerable adults the PCC trustees are eligible for a DBS check at the enhanced level. The Charity Commission strongly recommend that trustees are DBS checked in such circumstances.

### **Hiring 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 diocese.

The hire agreement should contain a provision requiring all those hiring church premises 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. (A national church template is available at Appendix 6 [Roles and Responsibilities Guidance](#)).





Ensure all those hiring church premises carry full public liability insurance for this, or are covered through the church insurance (e.g. 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 a clergy vacancy or long term sickness absence all information regarding safeguarding matters must be handed over to the Area Dean or Archdeacon as agreed with the DSA. The safeguarding information will be handed over to the incumbent upon their return to work or to the new incumbent as part of their induction into the diocese.