

How we keep the most vulnerable safe

SAFEGUARDING: Your questions answered

Q: Why is the process of checking volunteers via the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) so difficult? Doesn't it put people off from volunteering?

A: We have a duty of care to those young people and vulnerable adults who we run activities for, and their families. If any of our volunteers (or paid staff) had any previous convictions, or if there was any cause for concern about them, your parish needs to know about it beforehand.

The policy of the Church of England is that all those who work regularly with children or adults who may be at risk of harm should have an enhanced criminal record check. The process has to be rigorous so that families can be confident about leaving their loved ones with us.

Q: But no one in our congregation is a sex abuser!

A: It's impossible for us to know the complete history of everyone who attends public worship in our churches without doing some checking. And even if no one has ever had any convictions, there may have been some previous cause for concern. The police may share this information with us via the DBS process.

And it's not just about sexual abuse. Safeguarding is concerned with other issues too.

Safer recruitment, for instance, involves ensuring that the needs of the parish are matched to the skills of the worker or volunteer. It will be counter-productive to put someone in charge of a youth group if they don't have the right skills or experience.

Q: So who is responsible for making sure that the right people are appointed to the right posts?

A: Your PCC is ultimately responsible. So if, for instance, there was a compensation claim, your PCC may be liable.

Q: So what's the process for recruiting people to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults?

A: For paid staff or volunteer roles, there should also be a role description, which sets out what the applicant should do and what skills are required. The individual then fills out an application form, and the parish takes up references, and

checks whether there is any cause for concern via the DBS process.

There should be a face-to-face interview to assess the individual's suitability for the role, followed by induction and safeguarding training.

It's also good practice to have a period of probation, as well as ongoing supervision and regular review.

Q: Doesn't the Church believe in forgiveness? What if someone had a conviction but has turned their life around since then?

A: Hopefully our churches are places where all of us who have done wrong things can find forgiveness within a community of love and acceptance – as well as being challenged to act differently in future. All are welcome to worship, but that doesn't mean everyone can work with vulnerable people.

Our diocese has a policy of treating those with previous convictions fairly. Each case is treated individually, and in some cases an ex-offender might sign a contract agreeing to attend worship only when children aren't present.

Q: We want to promote our children's work, so why can't we take photos of children and put them online?

A: There may be very good reasons why a parent might not want their child's name or photo online, as it may reveal the child's location or identity publicly. Written permission should be obtained from parents before using names or photos of children and young people in print or online. Such forms are available on our diocesan website. However, where informed, written consent has been obtained, there is no other bar to using photos of children online.

Q: What do I do if I have a concern about the safety of a child or young person?

A: Every parish will have a named safeguarding representative, who is fully trained. You can express your concerns to them, or to the leader of the group, or to your incumbent. If necessary, they will also refer your concern to our diocesan team. If there is an urgent concern of immediate risk to a child, young person or vulnerable adult, you should call the police.

WE want to make sure that our churches are places where children and vulnerable adults are safe, and can thrive.

We want to make sure people of all ages feel welcome in church, and confident that we will keep them and their loved ones from harm. That's why safeguarding is so important.

There have been many high-profile cases recently where it's been revealed that the Church didn't act correctly or quickly enough in the past to protect those in their care. That's why there has been a transformation in the way that the Church of England handles safeguarding over the past 20 years.

Each diocese now has safeguarding officers who run training events for those in parishes, ensure that safeguarding policies are being followed, and help parishes that are facing safeguarding issues. Each parish also has a safeguarding representative, who ensures the right procedures are being implemented at parish level.

It means that anyone who wants to work with children or vulnerable adults has to go through a rigorous process to check their background and their suitability for the role. It means that activities are risk-assessed to protect us all from danger.

That means that those who send loved ones to church activities such as Sunday Schools, Messy Church, groups for the homeless or addicts, or youth groups can be confident in their safety.

And it means that the focus is rightly on those children and vulnerable adults that we are serving, rather than on the volunteers from our congregations.

Mary Daisy, one of our team of diocesan safeguarding advisers, said: "When the Church first started checking its staff and volunteers for previous convictions, insisting on training or asking for references, there was sometimes a sense in parishes that we shouldn't subject congregation members to that kind of intrusion. People would be convinced that there was no one in their congregation to worry about.

"Some people were anxious that if all volunteers had to be checked, fewer people might come forward to help with such activities. That showed they were worrying more about being polite to other adults in their church than protecting the children they might be working with.

"I think there has been a sea-change in the Church and in society generally. It is now accepted that our focus should be on the children, young person or vulnerable adult, and that it is appropriate that those working with them should be vetted, recruited and trained appropriately.

"There's also something about people's perceptions that is important as well. If those who allow us to work with their children can see that the proper procedures have been followed, they are more likely



Parents can be reassured that their children will be kept safe when they are involved with church activities

to trust us in future."

Our diocese employs a team of three safeguarding advisers. Ian Berry is a former police officer who liaises with the police and other agencies about specific cases. Mary Daisy is in charge of our policies and training, and Theresa Winship provides administrative support, especially in the area of DBS checking.

The range of training we provide includes a number of compulsory core modules for those who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults, which

includes face-to-face and online sessions. They are expected to attend refresher courses every three years.

There are extra modules for clergy and church leaders, which they are also expected to attend every three years to keep up with ongoing changes in policy – and specialist modules on safer recruitment and domestic abuse. Details of these courses can be found on our website.

An independent audit of our safeguarding procedures, published in January 2016, concluded that our diocese

was well on the way to developing a robust safeguarding culture to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Auditors from the Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE) were impressed with the openness and desire to learn evident within the diocese, and the commitment of clergy, staff and volunteers to care for those vulnerable older and younger people who engage with its churches.

The audit found that Portsmouth diocese had adopted comprehensive safeguarding policies, and a clear structure for managing

safeguarding in the diocese. Clergy, staff and volunteers who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults were given appropriate training, and knew their responsibilities to report any concerns. An impressive 1,900 lay volunteers had been given safeguarding training.

The bishop was praised for his clear leadership on safeguarding issues, as was the diocesan Safeguarding Panel, which has an independent chairman and oversees the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. The system of management,

TRAINING DATES: July-December 2017

Leadership Module (C23) training:
Thursday 27 July: Diocesan office, Peninsular House, Portsmouth

Wednesday 20 September: Diocesan office, Peninsular House, Portsmouth

Thursday, 12 October: Quay Arts Centre, Newport, Isle of Wight

Wednesday, 25 October: Diocesan office, Peninsular House, Portsmouth

Domestic Abuse Awareness (S3) training:
Wednesday 6 September: Quay Arts Centre, Newport

Wednesday 4 October: Peninsular House, Portsmouth

For future training dates, see www.portsmouth.anglican.org/safeguarding

oversight, checks and balances between those involved was praised.

The report said the diocese's safeguarding team works well, the skills and experience of the two diocesan safeguarding advisers complemented each other, and the team had a wealth of experience.

And one innovation in Portsmouth was the development of 'parish reviews' – sending an experienced professional to work alongside 10 parishes chosen at random, to help them to evaluate how good their safeguarding arrangements are.

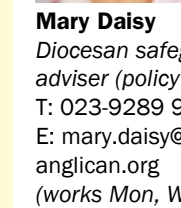
This project has led to plans to introduce a self-assessment tool, aimed at enabling parish leaders to improve their safeguarding practice.

For more information, see www.portsmouth.anglican.org/safeguarding.

OUR DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING TEAM



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Church seen as 'beacon of excellence'

WORK with children and young people is a priority at St Cuthbert's Church, Copnor – so safeguarding is also vital.

It offers a monthly Messy Church, a weekly Butterflies group for girls, a puppet ministry team, and the 'Frogs' group for children on Sundays. Young people are also involved in the music group, and the church organises an annual parish camp.

The church also runs a lunch club and the Encompass group for the elderly, and Helping Hands, a care group that gives practical support to those who are infirm or housebound. This means volunteers work regularly with vulnerable adults too.

These activities are led by more than 40 different volunteers, meaning that each of them has to be recruited safely and trained regularly.

It's a big task, but a diocesan audit

of the parish's safeguarding procedures declared it was "regarded as a beacon of excellence".

And leading the parish's safeguarding team is David Stemp, who has been working with children and young people himself for decades.

"We formed our safeguarding team 19 years ago when Mervyn Banting was the vicar," said David. "We meet once a term, report regularly to the PCC – because they are ultimately responsible – and it is on the agenda of every PCC meeting.

"We try to implement the diocesan safeguarding policy, especially the section about safer recruitment. Anyone who wants to work with children or vulnerable adults goes through a procedure, which includes a DBS check, an interview and references. If they don't make it through the process, we

have to say no.

"We have a list that is pinned up on a noticeboard of all those who are permitted to work with children and young people.

"And we're finding that parents actually ask us directly if everyone in Messy Church have been DBS-checked – there is much greater awareness of the issues these days."

Because the church has so many volunteers, our safeguarding team visits the parish to train them all regularly en masse, rather than enrolling them onto a diocesan course.

And St Cuthbert's was one of the first parishes whose safeguarding procedures were audited by Margaret Chappell, on behalf of our diocese's Safeguarding Panel. It was her report, in September 2015, that praised the parish for its comprehensive approach.



David Stemp at St Cuthbert's with the diocesan safeguarding policy