ST PETER & ST PAUL'S CHURCH

SHEPTON MALLET

# Towards a Safer Church

## Safeguarding Advice

## The PCC and Churchwardens' Guide

*Updated 5/6/2026 Ros Baldwin and Helen Bennett*

## What is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding means the action the Church takes to promote a safer culture promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults. It is about working to prevent abuse from occurring, seeking to protect those that are at risk of being abused and respond well to those that have been abused.

## Our Foundation—the Gospel

The Church 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.

## And More ...

The Church recognises the personal dignity and rights of all children, young people and adults, as enshrined in the Human Rights Act 1998 and the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Safeguarding work is undertaken within a legislative framework supported by government guidance which sets out a range of safeguarding duties, responsibilities and best practice.

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.

All PCCs are charities, whether they are registered or not. 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, including delegating responsibility to the Diocese to report on safeguarding cases.

**All PCCs are to . . .**

**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.

**Appoint** at least one appropriately experienced designated parish safeguarding officer to work with the incumbent and PCC. This PSO should be a lay person. The PSO may also be the DBS administrator for church officers who work with children or vulnerable adults.

**Safely Recruit, Support and Train** all church officers who work with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults.
Churches that qualify as 'charities for children or vulnerable adults' – that is where they make specific provision for children or vulnerable adults such as Sunday School, Youth Club, Pastoral Visiting, over 70s social groups etc but not otherwise – are required to safely recruit their PCC members to ensure they pose no risk to parishioners who may be vulnerable to abuse.

Training is mandatory for PCC members, and those holding the Bishop's licence, authorisation or commission. For all other roles it is good practice. Working Together to Safeguard Children, the statutory guidance from the government, makes it a requirement on all organisations, including faith organisations that provide services to children, that they provide induction on Safeguarding for all volunteers. This is met by the Church of England's online training courses.

For PCC members it is expected that modules on Basic Awareness, Safeguarding Foundations and Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse are completed either online or at face to face training sessions when possible. *(It is estimated that domestic abuse affects 1 in 3 women and 1 in 7 men. Therefore we will all know people who are victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse. The aim of the module is designed to equip participants to engage thoughtfully and proactively with the issue of domestic abuse and those affected.)*

Anyone working in a supervised role with children or vulnerable adults needs an enhanced DBS check and also a Basic Awareness level training course. Anyone in a leadership role with children or vulnerable adults, because they work unsupervised or because they supervise others who have a DBS check, needs Safeguarding Foundations level training.

***Please note**:* All trustees of the PCC are recommended to obtain a DBS check. Our PCC is a charity which sponsors and approves, in its own name, children's work or work with vulnerable adults. *

**Provide** appropriate insurance to cover for all activities undertaken in the name of the PCC which involve children and vulnerable adults.

***Please note:*** EIG have made clear that Diocesan procedures for training are to be followed, and that all people working with children or vulnerable adults should have training, otherwise the insurance may be invalidated should an incident arise or an allegation be made involving a person who has not been trained and should have been.

**Respond** to all concerns raised openly, promptly and consistently. Report all safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers to the diocesan safeguarding adviser, usually via the PSO.

**Churchwardens**

Churchwardens are the senior lay representatives of the parish. They are the foremost in representing the laity and in co-operating with the incumbent. In relation to safeguarding, the churchwardens work with the incumbent, PCC and parish safeguarding officer to:

**Ensure** that in the period of a vacancy (during an interregnum), that the incumbent's safeguarding roles and responsibilities are fulfilled, in consultation with the PCC, parish safeguarding officer and the Area Dean.

**Pay attention** to the specific needs of children and vulnerable adults when undertaking health and safety inspections and risk assessment.

**Ensure** that all parish activities with children and vulnerable adults are adequately supervised and insured.

**Ensure** that the parish has procedures for responding to complaints and grievances.

**Answer** questions regarding safeguarding as they arise in the archdeacon's visitations, and respond to any specific safeguarding advice, which may be given from the archdeacon.

*"...In the case of trustees, because of their position within the charity, we take the view that whenever there is a legal entitlement to obtain a DBS check in respect of such a trustee, a check should be carried out. This goes beyond circumstances where the trustee comes into contact with children..." – Charity Commission policy paper – 14 July 2014*