

The Parish Safeguarding Officer

GUIDANCE FOR
THOSE DOING OR
CONSIDERING THE
ROLE



Welcome to the new Diocese of Chichester booklet on the role of the Parish Safeguarding Officer! This booklet gives you some background information about the role, and can be used both by existing PSOs, and also by those considering taking on the role.

Firstly, we want to express our thanks for all those who take on this role in our parishes. Parish life is the heart of the Diocese, and is the most important context to get our safeguarding right. The Parish Safeguarding Officer role is a vital one – the ‘champion’ of safeguarding in the parish.

The Safeguarding Team in the Diocese have been working very hard to make achieving high safeguarding standards as straightforward as possible. We are acutely aware that parishes rely on volunteers!

But, we are also aware that there is a real determination across the Diocese to get safeguarding right - we are constantly encouraged by the amount of people who attend our training events, and by the contact we receive from people in parishes about various safeguarding issues.

The Parish Safeguarding Officer plays a key role in making good safeguarding happen at parish level, and the dedication and commitment of PSOs across the Diocese is something we can all be extremely grateful for. Those of us in the Safeguarding Team know that we couldn't do our job without them!

We have produced this new leaflet to help explain what the role is. This may be useful for those already in the role, but particularly for those

contemplating taking on this responsibility.

Much of the role of the PSO will revolve around three main areas: ensuring people in the parish access the required safeguarding training, ensuring the parish makes progress towards the 'Simple Quality Protects' safeguarding award (see below!), and responding to any specific safeguarding concern. This leaflet will give you more detail about all three; we hope that it will help you understand the role better, and be clear about what is expected.

The Safeguarding Team

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What Should I Be Called?

There have been a number of names for this role over the years. We have decided that the most straightforward name is 'Parish Safeguarding Officer'. The Parish is the legal entity, and it is with the incumbent and PCC that legal liability rests, so it is important that the safeguarding responsibility reflects this. It may be that for some parishes – especially busy ones – the PCC decides to appoint two PSOs. One obvious way of dividing responsibilities is to designate one person as PSO for child protection, and another as PSO for adult protection. This is fine and a good way of making the role more manageable.

In parishes with more than one church, it is good practice to have a safeguarding officer for each church, so that you have someone 'on the ground' in each location. But, there should still be clarity about who the Parish Safeguarding Officer(s) is/are, taking responsibility on behalf of the incumbent and PCC.

Finally, in a benefice containing more than one Parish, each Parish will need to appoint a Parish Safeguarding Officer.

How Do I Get Started?

You will need to be nominated and appointed by the PCC. You should have an interest in the safeguarding of children and adults, and ideally should have some background in this area, either professionally or as the safeguarding lead within another organisation, for instance the Scouts. (Although, we have found that professionals from other fields where compliance is a central feature... such as finance...are often well-suited to this role).

You will need to fill in a Confidential Declaration Form, and complete an application for a Disclosure and Barring Service check. Your parish will have a Lead Recruiter who coordinates DBS checking, and you will need to speak to this person about this. You will also need to go through the other elements of safer recruitment; you should provide references, and you should be interviewed to check your suitability for the role. (The interview will be done on behalf of the PCC, but probably by two people – e.g. the incumbent and a churchwarden).

You will need to receive an induction pack with your various parish safeguarding policies and safeguarding guidance documents within, and you should sign to say you have received this. (Please

note: some of these are items within SQP that may not be available yet in your parish, so it may be one of your first jobs to work with others in the parish to put them together! See the SQP section below for more details).

It is important for everyone to remember that overall responsibility and liability remain with the incumbent and PCC. You are exercising a specific responsibility on behalf of the PCC, but not accepting liability in their place. The incumbent and PCC should understand the remit of your role and provide you with full support.

Once you have been appointed, please provide the Safeguarding Team with your name, address, phone number and email address. These details will be added to the secure, electronic Contact Management System, so that we can contact you when necessary. In order to add your details onto the CMS, we need you to complete the Data Protection Form, available from the Diocesan website, giving us permission to do this.

(Please note: as communication and availability are key to the Parish Safeguarding Officer's role, a willingness to have your contact details placed on the Contact Management System is a requirement for this role).

What Are My Responsibilities?

Primary responsibility and liability remains with the incumbent and PCC. On behalf of the incumbent and PCC, the Parish Safeguarding Officer should:

1. Have an overview of all church activities involving children and vulnerable adults and keep a record of those activities
2. Ensure that the parish is complying with Diocesan safeguarding practice guidance
3. Liaise with the incumbent / churchwardens as appropriate about safeguarding issues in the parish
4. Offer advice and support to all leaders of activities within the parish on safeguarding issues
5. Liaise as necessary with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team
6. Report concerns regarding children or adults to the relevant statutory authorities in Sussex or the police
7. Report concerns about church officers to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team
8. Attend Diocesan Safeguarding Training offered for PSOs
9. Provide a quarterly update on safeguarding for the PCC
10. Ensure that the Parish Safeguarding Policies and PSO contact details are displayed in all church premises and readily accessible
11. Keep and securely store good records of any safeguarding concerns that may arise, and ensure that others do the same
12. Keep the church leadership informed of good safeguarding practice

How Do I Respond to Concerns?

The Diocesan website gives a substantial amount of information about responding to concerns, under the 'What Do I Do If?' section. The website also provides details of local and national contact details for various statutory and non-statutory agencies that can assist with safeguarding situations or queries, under the 'Links' section. Both are available at:

<https://safeguarding.chichester.anglican.org>

The key points to remember are:

- If you are concerned about a safeguarding situation, speaking to someone is always better than not doing so. Don't wait until you are certain - many safeguarding situations involve acting on suspicion.
- If you are concerned about imminent harm, phone 999
- If you have concerns that may be serious but not imminent, speak to the relevant Children's or Adult Services department, or the police on 101
- If you have concerns about the behaviour of someone in your church, contact the Safeguarding Team directly who will refer the case to the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer

How do I Improve Safeguarding in my Parish?

Simple Quality Protects (SQP) is an exciting new initiative that was introduced at Diocesan Synod in May 2017. SQP is a tool that tells you what you need to have to minister safely in your churches, will help you put those things in place, and will enable you to demonstrate that you have achieved a high standard of safeguarding provision.

There are four themes that form the core of SQP:

1. Safer Activities
2. Safer Practices
3. Safer Structures
4. Safer People

Simple Quality Protects is a simple, web-based checklist that shows you everything you need to have in place to ensure your parish's safeguarding is in good shape. It also provides you with all the templates, policy documents and other resources you need to achieve this: the answers, as you will see when you use the tool, are literally in the questions!

To access SQP, go to the Diocesan Safeguarding Website (<https://safeguarding.chichester.anglican.org>) and click on the SQP link at the top. Read the guide, watch the video, and click on the button to register for SQP. Allocate yourself to your parish from the drop-down menu, and you are ready to get going!

It is important to emphasise that SQP is a PCC responsibility, not just something to be allocated to the Parish Safeguarding Officer! The PSO is likely to be coordinating progress throughout SQP, but as you will see in the guide, we recommend that each parish puts together a small sub-group of the PCC to take the parish through Level 1 (which is what we have launched this year).

We have given parishes until Easter 2018 to achieve SQP Level 1. For most parishes this will be more than enough time, but for parishes that need extra assistance, the Safeguarding Team will be able to provide it. We believe that the SQP tool will make the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer much easier, as it will provide a clear framework to improve and monitor safeguarding practice and provision within the parish, will help to resolve any questions that parishes have about safeguarding, and will give all involved in safeguarding in the parish confidence that they have got everything in place they need to have.

Where Do I Go For Advice?

You are always welcome to approach the Diocesan Safeguarding Team for advice. However, please make yourself very familiar with the new Safeguarding website: <https://safeguarding.chichester.anglican.org> This site contains a lot of information, including the 'What Do I Do If' section which covers many typical safeguarding questions. Importantly, the website contains many links to outside organisations, both in this section and in the 'Useful Links' section as well. The website is a 'responsive' website, meaning it re-sizes itself if you access it on a smartphone. If you have a smartphone (and/or a tablet), we strongly suggest you save the website as a favourite. That way, you have the numbers and email address you need ready-to-hand when you need them, alongside the relevant advice.

