



## **SAFER RECRUITMENT POLICY**

The PCC takes very seriously the need to ensure that those entrusted with the care of our children, young people and adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect have the skills, knowledge and integrity for the work.

Safer recruitment practice is an essential part of our approach to safeguarding. This policy sets out safer recruitment practices for people working or volunteering with children and adults, in any capacity.

We will carefully select, train and support all those with any responsibility in line with Safer Recruitment principles by:

- Ensuring that our recruitment and selection processes are inclusive, fair, consistent and transparent.
- Taking all reasonable steps to prevent those who might harm children or adults from taking up positions of respect, responsibility or authority.
- Adhering to safer recruitment legislation, guidance and standards.
- Ensuring training for those in our church responsible for recruitment.

This policy must be followed for the appointment of all Church Officers for example members of the clergy authorised to officiate, churchwardens, licensed readers, lay workers, youth workers and parochial church councils.

The Ecclesiastical Insurance Group have stated that their insurance cover is only valid where national safeguarding policy and practice guidance is being followed.

### **Definitions**

A child is a person under 18 years of age and an adult is a person aged 18 or over. The Care and Support Statutory Guidance issued under the Care Act 2014 (14.2) by the Department of Health replaces the previously used term 'vulnerable adult' with 'adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect'. However the term vulnerable adult is retained by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and the Church of England.

In the Church of England's Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, section 6 defines a 'vulnerable adult' as a person aged 18 or over whose ability to protect themselves from violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation is, either temporarily or indefinitely, significantly impaired through physical or mental disability or illness, old age, emotional fragility or distress, or otherwise.

### **The recruitment process**

Finding and recruiting the right people to work with our children and adults is vital.

Responsibility for appointing clergy and licensed or approved lay ministers' rests with the Bishop. The responsibility for appointments and approval of paid officers and volunteers in churches rests with the PCC.

Everyone involved in the recruitment process must have been safely recruited themselves, be capable, competent and trained in safer recruitment.

All roles must have a clear job description which sets out the tasks the applicant will do and the skills required. The job description states whether the role requires a criminal records check, and the level of the check.

An application form must always be completed for a paid role to assess the person's suitability. An application form is also good practice when recruiting for a voluntary role.

Written references will be sought and responses considered before a confirmed offer of employment is made. Referees will be asked specifically about an individual's suitability to work with vulnerable people.

Application forms, references and other information will be scrutinised to ensure it is consistent and that a satisfactory explanation is provided for any discrepancies and/or any gaps in an applicant's personal history and/or career. The recruitment panel is responsible for checking applicants' documentation including references, identity and/or qualifications.

Face to face interviews must take place which include questions about an applicant's values, attitude to working with children and adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect and motives for wanting to engage in such work. Applicants must be asked if they know of any reason why they should not be working with these groups or if there are any pending cases/issues which could affect them or their ability to carry out the role. If they disclose any matters relating to children and/or adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect and which may affect their suitability for the role, this will be referred to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser for advice.

All paid posts will be subject to management, supervision and appraisal. For all volunteer posts, working with children and adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect, it is good practice to ensure regular supervision and conduct regular reviews, as the role requires, so that volunteers feel supported and issues can be discussed and/or resolved.

All applicants who will be working or volunteering with vulnerable people must complete a 'Confidential Declaration' which asks if there is any reason why they should not be working with children and/or adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect.

### **Criminal Records Checks**

It is the policy of the Church of England and good safeguarding practice that all those who work regularly with children and/or adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect must have, where appropriate, an enhanced criminal record check (with/without a check of the barred list, as appropriate). Those who work occasionally with vulnerable groups, who manage or supervise those who work with vulnerable groups and those in a leadership capacity who carry responsibility for safeguarding will also be asked to apply for enhanced checks, provided they are eligible.

Should the applicant not wish to apply for a criminal record check the application must **not** proceed further and must be terminated.

The eligibility criteria for enhanced criminal record checks is complicated but put simply, if you are over 16 and the role includes activities that allow regular/ substantial contact with children or adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect then you may be eligible for an enhanced criminal record check.

The House of Bishops has stated that criminal record checks must be renewed every five years (should there be a delay in obtaining the check, the person is **not** approved by the Church to act and must stand down pending completion of the process).

We will not receive a copy of the DBS certificate and therefore the applicant must provide us with sight of the original document on receipt.

Buckshaw Village Church encourages paid staff and volunteers to subscribe to the Update Service in order that their criminal record certificate be kept up to date. Applicants must apply to join the Update Service within 19 days of the criminal record certificate being issued.

If an applicant eligible for a DBS check lives overseas, the person recruiting should ask the applicant to obtain criminality information (also known as a certificate of good conduct/character) from the relevant embassy/high commission or police force. This is in addition to the DBS check.

If such information is not available from the embassy/high commission etc. or there are concerns about the reliability of the information provided, the person recruiting should take extra care when taking up references and checking any previous employment record. Additional references should be sought and at least one reference from a previous employer should be contacted by telephone as well as by letter.

### **Disclosure of Offences/Ex-Offenders**

Employing or allowing someone who is included on the barred list/s to work with children and/or adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect is a criminal offence.

If the disclosure includes offence information, this will be passed to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser who will assess the relevance and circumstances of offences and the risk. If the issues are complex, they will ask for assistance from the Local Safeguarding Board. The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser will make a recommendation concerning the suitability of the applicant to the person responsible for the appointment. Should the applicant not wish the confidential declaration or criminal record disclosure to be seen, the application must **not** proceed further and must be terminated.

Having a criminal record may not be a bar to working with children or adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect. If information is disclosed in the Confidential Declaration, advice must be obtained from the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser. Should the applicant not wish to complete the Confidential Declaration the application must **not** proceed further and must be terminated.

The Buckshaw Village Church policy statement on the recruitment of ex-offenders is available on our website.

### **Referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service**

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (SVGA) places a duty on organisations where people work or volunteer with children or vulnerable adults in regulated activity to make a referral to the DBS in certain circumstances to protect vulnerable people from harm. This is when an organisation has dismissed or removed a person from working/volunteering with children or vulnerable adults in regulated activity (or would/may have removed such a person if the person hadn't left or resigned etc.) because the person has:

- Been cautioned or convicted of a relevant offence (e.g. serious sexual or violent offence); or
- Engaged in relevant conduct in relation to children and/or vulnerable adults, (i.e. an action or inaction (neglect) that has harmed a child or vulnerable adult or put them at risk of harm as defined under the SVGA); or
- Satisfied the harm test in relation to children and/or vulnerable adults, (i.e. there's been no relevant conduct (i.e. action or inaction) but a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult still exists as defined under the SVGA).

Advice on referrals must always be obtained from the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

### **Decision Making**

The decision to appoint to voluntary or paid work must be made only by those who have that responsibility. The appointment must **not** be confirmed until relevant checks are received and examined. Criminal record checks that are not clear (i.e. which contain criminal convictions, cautions or additional information) must always be referred to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser for advice.

### **Training**

Employees or volunteers whose roles involve working with children and adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect must receive relevant safeguarding training from the Diocese after starting their role, regardless of previous experience, and must attend regular updates every three years.

This policy was adopted by the PCC in July 2022