



## ***Parish of West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze***

# **Diocese of Bristol Safer Recruitment Guidance and Toolkit**

### **Policy Statement**

**We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility within the Church, in line with safer recruitment principles, including the use of Disclosure and Barring Service disclosures.**

The Diocese of Bristol is committed to implementing safer recruitment practice in the recruitment of all Licensed ministers, volunteers and employees. The relevant vetting scheme is that of the Disclosure and Barring Service. The suitability of an applicant to work with children or adults at risk is never solely dependent on the outcome of a DBS check and the full safer recruitment process will be used to determine suitability of the candidate for the role.

Those who work with children and/ or vulnerable adults, and those who supervise those workers, who are eligible for a DBS check, will be required to undertake that check prior to starting in any role, whether employed or voluntary, within the Diocese of Bristol, as part of a safer recruitment process.

Those who are not eligible for a DBS check will be recruited in line with safer recruitment practice including the use of applications forms, references and interview where applicable.

Suitable induction, training and supervision will be provided to all those working with children and vulnerable adults.

### **Policy Context**

All recruitment of staff, volunteers and ministers to any post within the Church of England must comply with the Church of England 'Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance, 2021'<sup>1</sup>.

Failure to follow this policy in full may invalidate insurance cover, place children and adults at risk and constitute a reportable breach to the Charity Commission.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual/safer-recruitment-and-people-management-guidance>

The following guidelines provide a summary of the overall policy and explain the provisions as relevant to the Diocese of Bristol. These guidelines must be read alongside the national policy.

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## What is Safer Recruitment?

The practice of ensuring that all paid and volunteer staff are recruited in a way that ensures those individuals have the values and skills to do the work we ask of them and that people who present a risk to vulnerable groups e.g. children or vulnerable adults, do not work with them.

One of the strengths of church is the coming together of people of all ages and backgrounds. However, where someone wants to cause harm this is also one of churches weaknesses. By recruiting safely we meet our responsibilities to those we support to do all we can to ensure that those that lead, guide and work with the most vulnerable people are there to do good rather than to cause harm.

## Who Recruits Who?

It is important to make sure that anyone having substantial contact with children and vulnerable adults within the church is safely recruited.

<b>Role</b>	<b>Who is responsible</b>		<b>DBS Check</b>
All parish staff and volunteers	Vicar and PCC	The process may be delegated to those responsible for specific areas of work and supported by the Parish Safeguarding Officer.  PCC must keep a record of who has been recruited. DBS checks for those going into eligible roles are undertaken within the parish and records maintained there. 3 yearly DBS recheck completed by parish for those in eligible roles.	Parish
Parish volunteers approved to administer the chalice or home communion	Vicar and PCC	Parish is responsible implementing safer recruitment process as required.	Parish
Diocesan Bishops,	Lambeth Palace	Lambeth Palace recruits and completes the first DBS check for	Lambeth / Bishop's Office

<b>Role</b>	<b>Who is responsible</b>		<b>DBS Check</b>
Suffragan Bishops and Assistant Bishops		all Diocesan and Suffragan Bishops. 3 year re-checks for Diocesan Bishops.	
	Bishop's Office	Bishop's Office is responsible for 3 year re-checks for Suffragan Bishops and recruitment and initial and re-checks for Assistant Bishops.	
Stipendiary Clergy coming new into role	Diocesan Bishop	Recruitment of new Clergy is the responsibility of the Diocesan Bishop with support from HR and Bishop's Chaplain. DBS disclosure to be in place before licensing - overseen by HR Team.	HR Team
Stipendiary Clergy already in role	Diocesan Bishop	Bishops Office Staff maintain records and undertake 3 year DBS re check	Bishops Office
Licensed Clergy coming into role other than Stipendiary Clergy e.g. Associate Minister, Chaplain	Diocesan or Suffragan Bishop	Recruitment process including DBS check to be complete prior to licencing. Bishops Office staff to undertake initial and 3 year recheck of DBS.	Bishops Office
Clergy with Permission to Officiate (PTO) or Permission to Preach (PTP)	Diocesan Bishop	Process administered by Bishops office staff and Bishops Chaplain.  DBS check and 3 year DBS re check and licence renewal completed by Bishops Office staff.	Bishops Office

<b>Role</b>	<b>Who is responsible</b>		<b>DBS Check</b>
Licensed Lay Ministers (Readers)	Mission and Ministry Support Team	Licensing is the responsibility of the Diocesan Bishop. Process including DBS check completed by Mission and Ministry Support Team who also undertake 3 year DBS re check	Mission and Ministry Support Team
BAP Candidates	DDO	Process led by DDO. Candidate cannot progress to training until all application requirements including DBS disclosure in place. Managed by Mission and Ministry Support Team.	Mission and Ministry Support Team
Ordination Candidates	Mission and Ministry Support Team	Process as part of ministry development route. New DBS disclosure to be in place prior to ordination, managed by Mission and Ministry Support Team.	Mission and Ministry Support Team
Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance staff	HR Team and Line Manager	Process led by HR.	HR

The process for recruitment of those holding a Bishops licence is described in separate Church of England policy and guidance.

## Lay Staff and Volunteers

For all lay staff and volunteers refer to the following:

### Where to start?

The Church of England 'Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance, 2021' is the current Church of England policy and must be complied with in full. The policy explains how to recruit paid and volunteer staff safely. Everyone within the Diocese of Bristol must follow this policy when recruiting any paid or volunteer staff.

Further information about who requires a DBS disclosure and the process can be obtained from the Thirtyone:Eight Recruiters Guide - E Bulk System<sup>2</sup>.

Template recruitment forms and letters can be found in the 'Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance, 2021' (versions are also available for download from the Diocesan website). Additional advice and alternative templates are available through the Thirtyone:Eight website in the member's area. The approved Lead Recruiter for each parish will receive a log in to the Thirtyone:Eight site once registered.

Every organisation involved in recruitment and using DBS disclosures must have policies on Fair Recruitment of Ex Offenders<sup>3</sup> and on the Handling of Disclosure Information<sup>4</sup>. Each parish/organisation must ensure that they have their own versions of these policies in place when recruiting if using DBS disclosures.

The Charity Commission and insurers expect that everyone in an eligible role has a current DBS disclosure in place. Failure to ensure that this is the case has the potential to breach Charity Commission rules and to invalidate insurance policies. PCC's are recommended to ensure that they have adequate systems in place to monitor this effectively.

## Recruitment Process Outline

### Who is recruiting?

Be clear about who is responsible for recruitment and who will be involved in the process (in churches the process falls down when individuals decide to recruit without having the authority [from the PCC] or skill to do this).

### Start with the role

What do you need someone to do? Write down in a role description; what the person will do, where, when, and a person specification: what skills are needed?

### Volunteer Job Role Template

<http://www.bristol.anglican.org/content/pages/documents/7b53a773b26b31ca4fb38db24161526db509de94.docx>

### Use the role description to decide

What recruitment process is required?

1. Application;
2. Interview;
3. References;

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<sup>2</sup> <https://thirtyoneeight.org/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/content/pages/documents/1597662831.docx>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handling-of-dbs-certificate-information/handling-of-dbs-certificate-information>

#### 4. Is the role eligible for a DBS check<sup>5</sup>?

Ensure that the process is clear to applicants. Further information on how to decide on the process can be found in the Church of England 'Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance, 2021'.

#### Advertise the role

Make it clear what the role is, what the application process is and whether the role is eligible for a DBS disclosure check. This is your first chance to publicly state your commitment to safeguarding and safer recruitment. We know that those unsuitable to work with vulnerable people are far less likely to apply if they know from the outset that a DBS disclosure will be required and/or that references will be taken.

#### Application form

The aim is to find out why the person wants the role and what skills and experience they bring to it. What questions are asked on the form will depend on what the role is but where a role involves contact with children or vulnerable people it should always include:

- name, address and telephone number.
- qualifications and experience.
- employment history with an explanation for any gaps and reason for leaving.
- contact details of named referees.
- information (based on the job description and person specification) in support of the application for the role.
- a declaration that all the information contained in it is true and that the applicant agrees to a Disclosure check being carried out where eligible should the organisation wish to appoint them.
- Date and signature box for applicant.

A template application form is available here:

<http://www.bristol.anglican.org/content/pages/documents/248849de10f01d4b2a1ff604b6d271d6bc77dc07.docx>

#### Interview

Depending on the role this could be informal or formal. The aim is to explore further the information on the application form. How can the person demonstrate their skills and experience in relation to the role, what support or training might they need? Check out any gaps in employment history.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dbs-eligibility-guidance>

A template interview/ discussion form is available here:

<http://www.bristol.anglican.org/content/pages/documents/6b48c7eddbcae84c744cf66da4070cfee33b1ace.docx>

## Offer the role to successful person(s)

Use an offer letter, which also explains the next steps (NB: they must not start the role at this point!).

Any offer of appointment to a role paid or voluntary must clearly state that this is subject to references and where required a DBS check.

## References

Take up references. What is required will depend on the role. Where the role is paid and/or involves substantial contact with children and/or vulnerable adults ensure that at least one referee is a person from outside of the church.

Obtaining references is an essential part of gathering information about the applicant. Ideally at least one reference should be from the current employer or a previous employer if they are not currently working/ volunteering. The reference request should include requests for the following information:

- Comments about the applicants' ability to perform the duties of the role (the job description and person specification / volunteer role profile should accompany the reference request);
- Comments about the applicants' attitude towards children / vulnerable adults and towards safeguarding generally; and
- Any further information that might give rise to concern, either about the applicants' attitudes, values or known practices.

Information given by the referee can then be compared with information provided by the applicant.

References should be followed up with a telephone call in order to verify their identity and it provides an opportunity to clarify any queries you may have. It also provides an opportunity to thank the referee for their time in completing the reference.

At least two references should be obtained. It is good practice to inform those applying to work for you that you reserve the right to telephone referees and to make contact with any previous employer if necessary, so that they are aware, and the rationale for this. Decisions on appointment should be made using the details given in the written reference, having sought any clarification you may therefore require a revised written reference.

Where a reference is sought from an employer, this should be completed by a manager or personnel officer rather than a colleague, and sent on headed paper. Open references (such as those headed 'to whom it may concern') should not be accepted as these could be



out of date and may give rise to questions about authenticity. It is typical for such references to be written as part of 'compromise agreements' following difficulties in the workplace.

It is always important to reserve the right to make any further character enquiries you consider necessary. For example, you might want to seek a reference from a previous place of worship even though details are not supplied by the applicant. In such cases, the applicant should be consulted.

A model Reference form is provided for your use here:

<http://www.bristol.anglican.org/content/pages/documents/ea4177f115bbda9a79e7f356f13a2e2503152591.docx>

## Confidential Self Declaration

Where the role involves substantial work with children and /or vulnerable adults ask the person to complete a "Confidential Self Declaration". This can be requested at the application stage and placed by the applicant into a sealed envelope but should not be opened until the post has been offered subject to referencing and a DBS check if eligible.

The Confidential Self Declaration form to be used is available here:

<http://www.bristol.anglican.org/content/pages/documents/a0b145db36050a9f257210162c8da7efbbf2cbc3.docx>

**Note:** Where a post involves substantial contact with children and/or vulnerable adults, it is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and other similar legislation. This means special conditions apply. You are only allowed to ask questions about spent convictions and cautions where the role has substantial contact with children or vulnerable adults. A self declaration can only be used for roles that do not have substantial contact with children and/or vulnerable adults where the questions are amended to ask for information about unspent cautions and convictions only. A question can be asked on the application form about any unspent cautions or convictions that an individual has if relevant.

The form should be returned to the person responsible for obtaining DBS disclosures in a sealed envelope. Any information on the form should be kept confidential and be discussed with the applicant. The applicant's consent should be sought before any information provided on the self declaration is shared with others. If consent is not given this may mean that the individual is not able to be recruited. The application process can be stopped at this point if the information disclosed means that the role is not suitable for the individual.

It is important that the organisation has a policy regarding the employment of those with a criminal record. Information disclosed on a confidential self disclosure or DBS disclosure should undergo risk assessment to determine whether the individual is able to progress in the application process. For the Diocese of Bristol this information is contained in the Fair Recruitment of Ex Offenders policy.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/content/pages/documents/1597662831.docx>

## DBS Disclosure Application

For those applying for an eligible role: ask them to apply for a DBS disclosure. All DBS applications in the Diocese of Bristol are processed online via Thirtyone:Eight. Each parish will need to recruit one or more individuals to be registered with Thirtyone:Eight as Lead Recruiter/s (manage the DBS process including applications, ID check and recording results). This can operate on a team or benefice basis if preferred. Additional Recruiters may be nominated (ID check only). Lead Recruiters and anyone leading a recruitment process should complete the Safer Recruitment and People Management Training, available as an online course through the CofE Safeguarding Training Portal<sup>7</sup>.

The Parish Safeguarding Officer or delegated other person must record the outcome of the DBS disclosure including: Applicant name, date of birth, disclosure number and disclosure date. If any information is disclosed on the Disclosure certificate the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer must be contacted with the applicants consent. If consent is not given the individual cannot proceed into the role.

## Overseas Applicants

If a candidate/applicant etc. for a position that is eligible for a DBS check is coming from overseas who, either has never lived in the UK or spent a period of time out of the UK (i.e. lived abroad), the person making the appointment should request an additional check and ask the applicant to obtain criminality information (also known as a certificate of good conduct/character) from his/her relevant embassy/high commission (or police force). This means that in addition to the DBS check, the candidate/applicant must seek this additional check to cover the time he/she spent abroad (Further advice can be found on the Home Office website<sup>8</sup>).

## DBS Updates

The DBS provides a service called 'Updates'<sup>9</sup>. Applicants may register for this service at the point of application for a DBS certificate. It is free for volunteers but has an annual charge for paid staff. The Diocese of Bristol does not pay the annual fee for paid staff. PCC's may choose to accept 'Updates' so long as the service is used in line with the Church of England 'Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance 2021'. However the Diocese of Bristol will **not** be notified when a disclosure is obtained via the 'Update' service and parishes are therefore advised to ensure that the date the service was used, the outcome,

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<sup>7</sup> [Safeguarding Training Portal \(cofeportal.org\)](https://www.cofeportal.org)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-records-checks-for-overseas-applicants>

<sup>9</sup> [Update Service and other DBS online services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/update-service-and-other-dbs-online-services)

and the certificate number, date and type checked are recorded within the parish for future reference.

## DBS Portability

Portability is the term employed for using a criminal record check obtained in one role, for a new role. Anyone applying for a new role in a Church of England organisation within the diocese where he/she currently works or applying for a new role in the cathedral where he/she currently works does not require a second criminal record check (i.e. his/her current check will be portable), provided the result of the criminal record check has been seen, does not need renewing and the new role is: -

- With the same “workforce” (i.e. either working with children or working with adults experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect); and
- Eligible for the same/lower level of criminal record check as the previous role.

Portability will not apply and a new criminal record check will **always** be required where:

- A person moving into a role in the Church of England from an external organisation e.g. a volunteer with Scope (the disability charity) wants to volunteer in a church or a youth worker, working in a local authority, applies for a role in the Church; or
- An individual is seeking ordination, reader or lay ministry training; or
- A person moves to a new job or role in a new diocese or cathedral; or
- A person moves roles to work with a different workforce. For example from working with children to working with adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect and vice versa ;or
- The level of check required changes to a higher level (e.g. in his / her new role a person is eligible for an enhanced plus barred list check; but in his/her previous role he/she was only eligible for an enhanced check without a check of the barred list).

## Confirm in Role

The person must only be confirmed in role and start once the whole process is complete. This includes satisfactory references and DBS disclosure certificate having been seen and any risk assessment required having been completed.

The PCC must then be informed that the person has been recruited and this information must be recorded in the PCC minutes. It is good practice to confirm an appointment in writing and a brief letter template is provided for this purpose:

<http://www.bristol.anglican.org/content/pages/documents/f29d234328fbd39634102a0dd6e4813f649e9a70.docx>

## Decision not to appoint

Where a person is deemed not to be suitable for a role following references and a DBS disclosure having been obtained, the person must be informed in writing by the recruiter of the decision and the reasons for this.

## After recruitment

The process does not stop there!

## DBS Renewal

It is Church of England policy that all staff and volunteers in eligible roles and those holding a Bishop's licence apply for a new DBS Disclosure within 3 years of the last certificate.

A DBS certificate is not a clearance to work. It is closest in kind to an MOT certificate. All it provides is the relevant information the police held on the day the certificate was issued. It is possible that an individual may receive a caution or conviction or that other information may be held by police following a DBS certificate being issued. We may not find out about this unless either the individual tells us or we check again. By being clear that we do re-check every 3 years we expect individuals to tell us about any convictions or cautions they receive.

## Probation and Review

It is important that once a new staff member, including volunteers, is in post that they are supervised to ensure that they are coping with their new role.

Each individual should start on a probationary period. This is a period in which the individual can try out their role and the employer can ensure that the person they have recruited is working in the way expected. This is usually 3-6 months.

A review should happen at intervals e.g. 3 and 6 months and then annually.

Suitable induction, training and support should be offered during and after the probationary period. Any individual working with children and/or vulnerable adults must complete the Basic and Foundation level safeguarding training provided by the Church of England<sup>10</sup> during induction and update that training at least every 3 years. Some roles will require additional or more advanced training. The provision of this induction and training is the responsibility of the employer (information regarding safeguarding training available through the Diocese of Bristol is available here:

<https://www.bristol.anglican.org/churchlife/safeguarding/safeguardingtraining/>

Where an individual is not meeting the requirements of the role, this should be identified during the probationary period and a plan agreed with them to resolve the issues. This

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<sup>10</sup> [Safeguarding Training Portal \(cofeportal.org\)](https://www.bristol.anglican.org/churchlife/safeguarding/safeguardingtraining/)

could be additional training, support or a change in tasks. Where the plan fails to resolve the issues an individual may fail to pass their probationary period and therefore be advised in writing that their employment (paid or voluntary) is terminated.

## Referral to DBS

Where it is the case that the person has been removed or has stepped down from a role that involves working with children or vulnerable adults due to having:

- Been cautioned or convicted of a relevant offence (e.g. a 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 Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act, 2006); or
- Satisfied the harm test in relation to children and/or vulnerable adults, (i.e. there has been no relevant conduct [i.e. no action or inaction] but a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult still exists as defined under the SVGA).

It is a requirement that the individual be referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service for the DBS to consider whether that individual should be barred from working with children or 'vulnerable adults'. Advice should always be sought from the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer in these situations. A failure to refer to the DBS where there is a duty to refer is an offence and liable to a £5,000 fine.

## Staff and helpers under 18 years of age

Age of staff and volunteers: The minimum age for a worker is 16 because this is the minimum age for obtaining a DBS disclosure. It is essential that the level of maturity and experience of a person of 16 plus is assessed during the recruitment process. It would be usual to expect any person aged 16-18 to require supervision to work well and safely whilst they build their knowledge and experience (the same could be said of those 18+ entering a new role).

Where people under 16 assist in activities as helpers they should be supervised by another named worker and never be in a position where they are providing unsupervised care of children. They must not be included in staff/child ratios.

<b>Document Control Information</b>		
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Next Review Due	September 2024	