

Frequently asked questions about Carlisle Diocese Safeguarding People Policy 2012

1. Why is the policy so long?

The policy contains legal requirements and best practice guidance, along with useful templates in the appendices. All sections are relevant to how our churches approach safeguarding and respond when there are difficulties or concerns. However, not all the sections will be used all the time. For example the section 5 on Recognising Abuse, and section 6 on Responding to Abuse need to be digested and understood so that when a problem arises you know what to do and how to react, since you are likely to react and respond before turning to the policy. Section 7 is about the Supervision of offenders, and only applies to particular circumstances. Again it is good to be familiar with what is in this section so that you know what to do if and when a person who may pose a risk is present in your congregation.

It is hoped that the policy can be a thorough one-stop shop for those working with children/young people and vulnerable adults in our churches. If you read the national guidance documents (see the website for more details) you will see we have attempted to include this guidance here, in this diocese policy.

2. Which bits apply to our small parish?

The whole document is relevant to every parish and every parish needs to be familiar with it. It is really important that we embrace good safeguarding policy and practice and don't take it for granted that we are a trusted Christian organisation where people care about each other. Sadly people get hurt and abused or have bad experiences in church related activities. Only by having a clear policy which is put into practice can we tackle this problem.

If you don't run children's groups regularly, you need a safeguarding children policy because we want everyone to know that when they come to church for a wedding, or when the vicar goes into the local school to take assembly, the welfare and care of the children will be paramount.

If you don't have adults who may be vulnerable attending church regularly, you still need a safeguarding vulnerable adults policy so that those in your community who you are visiting in their own homes or in hospital, will know that you are alert to how vulnerable people could be abused and that you will respond appropriately, while also treating them with care and thoughtfulness.

Every parish will have to translate the guidance into their local context and find ways of working with it so that good safeguarding practice is followed. It might take a bit of time to do that, and may mean using the help of other churches resources to help put it into practice.

3. What's new in the policy?

The policy provides up-to-date good practice guidance for all those working with vulnerable groups, including children, in our churches. The first question to ask is do you know what was in the last policy? For some reminders see below, but first for the brand new stuff...

i. Vulnerable adults

New to the Safeguarding People policy April 2012 is the information about safeguarding vulnerable adults. This includes the definition of a vulnerable adult in the introduction (section 1), the code of conduct for working with adults who may be vulnerable (section 2 ii), Recognising Abuse to adults who may be vulnerable (section 5ii) and Responding to concerns and complaints in respect of this group (section 6).

ii. Safer Recruitment

The new policy has a whole section on how to recruit volunteers safely (section 4) and appendices 2 provides useful templates for recruitment and CRB checklist to help with implementing this. Ecclesiastical insurance and government guidelinesⁱ require us to take care locally in the recruitment of volunteers who work with vulnerable groups, including children. This does not only involve careful consideration as to whether a CRB is required, but us only appointing people to work with children, even on an occasional basis, where we can be sure they are safe to do so.

iii. Role of parish safeguarding co-ordinator

This has developed and changed over time and has the potential to be more than administrative, if the person appointed has the time and skills. The role description in section 2 of the policy provides some idea of the breadth of the role, if someone can be found locally to follow this. If not, be honest about what they can or cannot do. It is helpful to have some professional experience but not essential.

iv. Recognising abuse and Domestic Violence

This section has been expanded, adding more information and recognising more types of abuse such as bullying, internet-related abuse, child trafficking and forced marriage, among others. Domestic Violence is also recognised, and receives its' own section (section 5 iii) given the seriousness of the prevalence of this type of abuse and the impact upon whole families, and the need to recognise and respond when this is happening in a family. Recognising abuse to adults who may be vulnerable is in section 5 ii (as already mentioned above).

4. Reminder of what's been advised for a while

The advice to not travel alone with children is not new. The March 2005 policy, Section 6.7 and 6.8 gave instructions to bell ringers, to never travel alone with a child and always gain written parental consent for trips. This is the updated policy, but no reference is made particularly to bell ringers, since the principle applies to children in whatever activity they are involved with in our churches.

The 2005 policy advised "Volunteers with children will be properly appointed, trained and supervised (sample policy 2005) and every activity organised for children, on or off the premises, will provide proper safeguards...and assessment of premises, activities, procedures, equipment, staffing and all other issues which may affect the potential safety of the children". This is also in the updated policy, but with more detail as to what the safeguards involve.

Staffing ratios for children's activities must be followed, with no single adult ever having sole contact with a child.

5. We don't do any children's work so why do we need a policy on safeguarding children?

If you don't run children's groups regularly, you need a safeguarding children policy because we want everyone to know that when they come to church for a wedding, or when the vicar goes into the local school to take assembly, the welfare and care of the children will be paramount.

6. What is the minimum requirement in implementing the policy?

Parishes must adopt the diocese policy. Insurance through Ecclesiastical requires that you follow diocesan advice, and to not do so could invalidate your insurance policy. If in doubt contact your insurer directly.

7. Our safeguarding co-ordinator can't fulfil all that is in the role description. What shall we do?

Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinators can be expected to have varying capacity as to how they can tackle the safeguarding role, outlined in Section 2 of the policy. Some will have professional experience but be busy in full-time employment and have the expertise but lack time, and in some parishes there may be no one with particular expertise, but someone who is willing to do the role and has time available. Each parish must get the person to the role who best fits the role description, and they must be honest with themselves and the PCC about what parts of the role they can do and what they will struggle with. It may be that others involved in church life can take on some of the role or you can draw upon the expertise of an advisor from another neighbouring benefice.

8. What training is available?

Please keep an eye on the Safeguarding web page and in your local deanery for safeguarding training available in the autumn.

9. When are the changes going to happen with portable CRB checks?

A number of changes are being planned by the government following royal assent of the Protection of Freedoms Act in May 2012. Changes will be rolled out regarding portability of CRB checks, tightening up on who is entitled to a CRB check, and which roles require a tick in the 'ISA Check' box on the CRB form. Information will be widely circulated once it becomes available later in 2012 and early 2013.

10. Why isn't there more guidance about false allegations?

False allegations cause a lot of trauma and anyone experiencing this will need support, as well as the person who made the allegation. However, false allegations are very rare. Recent statistics tell us that just 3% of allegations of sexual abuse are false; which is the same level as the reporting of other crimes. Any allegation should always be treated seriously. Those hearing an accusation should not attempt to investigate it. To do so could tip-off a person responsible and alert them to cover their tracks. It could lead to the police prosecuting the person who investigates for perverting the course

of justice. The guidance in the diocesan policy should be adopted and followed in all instances where an allegation is made.

Of great concern is the level of abuse to children in our society and the difficulties in reporting it. Details from NSPCC research in 2011 (www.nspcc.org.uk) highlight that:

- Nearly a quarter of young adults (24.1%) experienced sexual abuse (including contact and non-contact), by an adult or by a peer during childhood.
- More than one in three children aged 11-17 (34%) who experienced contact sexual abuse by an adult did not tell anyone else about it. (NSPCC 2011)

11. How do we find our way round and what do we need?

i) Find the policy at www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/safeguarding and part way down the page click on the policy.

ii) The Vicar and Church Wardens need to be familiar with the whole policy and identify who needs to implement which section. The Checklist in Section 1 helps to identify which sections people with particular roles should read.

iii) Identify what changes need to be applied to your parish and get your PCC to draw up a strategy to implement it. You can use appendix 1 (h) to help do this.

iv) The PCC adopts the policy by completing the Parish policy templates in Appendix 1 (a) for children and young people and 1 (b) for adults who may be vulnerable.

ⁱ Changes to disclosure and barring: what you need to know. HM Government 2012