

Introduction

3 minutes read

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Version: 1

The Church of England's policy statement, '[Promoting a Safer Church](#)' sets out the Church's commitment to the safeguarding of children and adults. This commitment extends to religious Communities under the "Whole Church" approach.

Under the [Religious Communities Regulations 2020](#), in order to be a recognised or acknowledged community under the new Canon DA1, communities must ensure their governing documents:

- impose on members and officers of the community (including the Visitor) duties that are equivalent to those imposed by or under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duties in relation to safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults);
- make provision as to the persons or bodies who have particular responsibility in relation to the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults;
- make provision for the Visitor's functions in relation to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

This document contains duties that are equivalent to those imposed by or under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016. It is intended to amend section 5 and we expect those changes to be introduced in mid-2021. However, that does not affect the status of this document.

This document is designed to be used both before and after the law changes. It is structured into sections that contain both "Requirements" and "Guidance". Sections labelled "Requirement" (the blue boxes) are mandatory for all members of religious communities. The "Guidance" is advice and explanation to support people in delivering the Requirements to a good quality. The Guidance explains, for example, how to deliver some of the Requirements, sets out some good practice examples, and explains why some Requirements are necessary. In other words, it explains "why and how" to deliver the Requirements.

Scope

This document applies to members of all those religious communities which are recognised or acknowledged under the [Religious Communities Regulations 2020](#).

Definitions

Please refer to the main [Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults policy](#) for definitions of children vulnerable adults and abuse.

Recognised communities are those which are organised along the traditional Benedictine vows of stability, conversion of life and obedience, or the "evangelical counsels" of poverty, chastity and obedience. Members spend a period – usually at least three years – in temporary/first/simple vows after the noviciate and before Solemn or Life vows when they cease to hold personal property, and live either in community or as solitaries. Recognised communities will have a Rule and Governing Documents which provide for the ordering of the life of the community.

Acknowledged communities vary in their practice and lifestyle. In most cases, the members are dispersed, with opportunities provided for meeting together whilst in others there may be a shared life in one place in what is otherwise a dispersed community. In some communities, all the members are single with a vow of celibacy, whilst in others, members may be single, married or in a partnership. Members make 'seasonal vows' of commitment, most holding down jobs in wider society. Each community has a Rule of Life and Governing Documents which provide for the ordering of the life of the

community.

Related policies

All policies are available on the [Church of England webpage](#)

- Safeguarding Children Young People and Adults (update due in 2021)
- [Safer Recruitment \(2021\)](#)
- [Safer Environments and Activities \(2019\)](#)
- [Code of Safer Working Practices \(2019\)](#)
- [Key Roles and Responsibilities \(2017\)](#)
- [Responding Well to Safeguarding Concerns or Allegations that relate to Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Practice Guidance \(2018\)](#)
- [Responding to, assessing and managing concerns or allegations against church officers practice guidance \(2017\)](#)
- [Responding well to domestic abuse practice guidance \(2017\)](#)
- [Responding well to those who have been sexually abused practice guidance \(2011\)](#)
- [Learning and Development Framework \(2020\)](#)
- [Serious Incident Reporting: Guidance for Religious Communities \(2020\)](#)

Review

This policy will be reviewed no later than November 2022.

Section 1 - General Provisions

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Requirements

1.1 All religious communities must comply with all the House of Bishops' safeguarding guidance and embed these into their practices where it is applicable, in accordance with the "Whole Church" approach.

1.2 Safeguarding policies apply both internally and externally:

1.2.1 Between individuals within communities (be they acknowledged or recognised).

1.2.2 When ministering to those outside the religious community, or when receiving visitors in whatever capacity, in which case they apply to both parties.

1.3 The Leader of each religious community has overall responsibility for ensuring compliance with safeguarding policies and good practice and for promoting a safer culture.

1.3.1 The Leader will be trained to Senior Leadership level in Safeguarding (see section 4)

1.4 The governance documents of a religious community (or the charity which has legal responsibility for that community) must state that they accept and abide by the House of Bishops' Guidance for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults in the Church of England.

1.5 Local arrangements for delivery of this policy will need to be put in place. These must be reviewed annually and must set out how the policy will be implemented locally according to the particular needs and context of the community. They do not replace the policy.

Guidance for Section 1

The Church of England wants to create a change in culture in the way safeguarding is viewed by all its many component parts. This moves away **from** the current perception that safeguarding is something which is done “additionally”, as a tick-box exercise or by a designated individual, **to** a culture where safeguarding is in the DNA of the Church and the people who comprise the Church. To become a Safer Church, safeguarding needs to be in the heart and soul of the Church’s theology and mission. With this perspective, safeguarding policies and procedures should be approached, not with a spirit of fear and (sometimes) reluctant compliance, but rather with an appreciation that they are an external expression and working out of an internal understanding of safeguarding being intrinsic to Christian beliefs and values.

Religious communities should therefore reflect what other policies and processes (formal or informal) in existence may need to be reviewed or amended in light of this, to demonstrate they have good safeguarding practice at their core. It is expected that this safeguarding policy will need to be supplemented with local procedures which will be individual to each community, and it is recommended to review these annually.^[1] These will set out how the policy principles will be applied to that particular community’s needs, for example, how it will be applied in a community of six who live together will be different from how it will apply in an international community with thousands of members. These will need to include, for example and where relevant:

- How to report concerns to Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors (DSAs), and which DSAs to report to
- How to manage events which occur abroad
- How to access training and at what level

All new national safeguarding policies will be uploaded to an e-manual. This means that the most up-to-date version will always be available, and this is particularly beneficial for acknowledged communities. It is not recommended that copies are printed; however, if they are, care will need to be taken to ensure these are replaced following any updates.

^[1] This may be required for some insurance policies.

Section 2 - Appointing a Designated Safeguarding Person

4 minutes read

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Requirements

2.1 Each community must appoint a Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP)

2.1.1 The DSP must not be the Leader of the community. They need not be a safeguarding professional but must be able to demonstrate an aptitude for the role.

2.1.2 In exceptional circumstances, an external DSP may be appointed, this must be done in conjunction with the DSA.

2.2 The DSP must be trained in safeguarding at the leadership pathway level and take day-to-day responsibility for safeguarding practice, awareness raising and ensuring there is safeguarding training provision in place.

2.2.1 In a recognised community, the DSP is responsible for establishing links with the DSA in the diocese where the main community house is based. It is accepted that there may be some differences in local practice, and these should be reflected in the local arrangements - for example, where a community has houses in different dioceses.

2.2.2 In an acknowledged community, the DSP will be responsible for establishing links with a lead DSA (normally from the area where the Episcopal Visitor is based) for the purposes of making a connection, acknowledging that any safeguarding reports will be made to the DSA in the diocese where the incident occurred. This must be clarified in the local arrangements.

2.2.3 The DSP may be trained to co-train alongside the DSA.

2.3 The DSP is the person to whom all concerns must be reported, unless the concerns are about the DSP, in which case they be reported directly to the DSA. In an emergency situation, first contact should always be with the police or social services.

2.4 The DSP must report all allegations or concerns to the DSA in the first instance (see section 6 later).

2.5 The DSP must discuss all safeguarding matters, including ongoing cases, preventative measures and embedding a safeguarding culture with the Leader at regular meetings.

2.6 The DSP will help facilitate the culture change referred to previously by taking a risk based, preventative approach, proportionate and appropriate for their community.

Guidance for Section 2

The role of the DSP is to provide advice and support to all members of the community, including leaders, guests and visitors. They should liaise with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser to secure training for members and for advice on dealing with reports. The DSP will be the first point of contact for any concerns which are raised (see section 6 later). A template person specification/roles and responsibilities is included at Appendix A.

Download [Template Person specification](#)

One key aspect of the DSP role will be to help develop the organisational culture and promote a healthy, safer community. The role is not simply about reacting to situations, but proactively identifying and mitigating risks where these exist, having open discussions about behaviour, regular meetings with the Leader and helping to embed safeguarding throughout the life of the community. In other words, enabling the culture change referred to under Section 1 to take place. This is an ongoing process, and can be started by having honest discussions about culture, seeking advice from the DSA, undertaking the training courses and using the tools and resources available on the Church of England website.^{[1],[2]} A self-audit tool is available at Appendix B. This is not designed to be exhaustive and deals only with the implementation of the policy. Once the policy is implemented, thought will need to be given as to how to evaluate the policy, ie, how to know it is working and making a difference.

The reason for establishing a relationship with one “lead” DSA for acknowledged communities or where there are multiple community houses, is to act as a point of reference in terms of keeping up-to-date, being made aware of national changes, and any queries about general practice or training. The DSP may wish to have regular check-in sessions with the DSA, and should undergo an induction on appointment. Where it is relevant, this should be in addition to links with local DSAs, to whom any actual concerns need to be reported

[1] https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Safer%20Environment%20and%20Activities%20Oct19_0.pdf

[2] <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/promoting-safer-church/policy-practice-guidance/templates-resources>

Section 3 - Safer Recruitment and People Management

6 minutes read

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Requirements

Employees/Volunteers

3.1 The Safer Recruitment and People Management policy applies to all employees/volunteers who will have a role working with children or vulnerable adults or providing a service to them on behalf of the community.

3.1.1 In line with the [Safer Recruitment and People Management policy](#), the DSP should review each of these relevant roles (with the help of the DSA if required) to document the level of DBS checking and training required, and ensure this happens.

3.1.2 Where any concerns regarding safeguarding are discussed as part of any recruitment process or subsequent people management process, a written record must be kept, in line with data protection principles.

3.2 Joining a recognised community:

3.2.1. All those seeking to join a recognised community need, as part of the joining process, to have had discussions which explore issues around safeguarding behaviours and beliefs, alongside values and motivations.

3.2.2 If there are any concerns as to the suitability of the person seeking to join the community, where there may be members who are vulnerable, this must be discussed with the DSA and the Leader before a decision is made.

3.2.3 A similar process should take place with anyone wishing to be an Alongsider^[1], and where possible a reference from a person in authority must be sought.

3.3 Joining an acknowledged community:

3.3.1 As part of the period of preparing to join a community, there must be at some point a discussion around safeguarding, values, motivations and boundaries.

3.3.2 Once a person in an acknowledged community wishes to take on a leadership role in that community, Safer Recruitment principles must apply.

3.4 Trustees:

3.4.1 In those communities which are also charities, whether registered or not, Trustees must be recruited in line with [Charity Commission guidance](#)

3.5 All communities must have in place a mechanism which allows annual review and dialogue about the health of the culture within the community to help prevent abusive behaviour and ensure any actual abusive behaviours are identified and addressed. Depending on size, this may be just the Chapter (or equivalent leadership group) of the community. However, there should be an opportunity for all members to feed in their views.

[1] An Alongsider is someone who lives with the community for a period of time, either for a time to contemplate or to reflect whether the religious community life is for them

Good practice advice

It is recognised that ordained members will have gone through a safer recruitment process prior to ordination, but they will still need to go through a process as part of their preparation for joining a recognised or acknowledged community as set out above. It is also recognised that communities strive to be as welcoming and inclusive as possible, but this needs to be proportionately balanced against risks and will depend on the nature of the community.

For recognised communities, it is of utmost importance that no-one who is going to be a risk to themselves, to other members of the community or to members of the public is admitted, but is supported to get help in other ways. Therefore, these issues should be fully explored as part of the process of joining, and if any issues are raised, these should be discussed with the DSA and the Leader. It is accepted that someone may present with issues which are temporary, or which are more permanent, and the receiving community needs to be confident in their ability to support people appropriately. It is unlikely that the community will be able to make this judgement on its own, therefore advice from the DSA (and through them potentially the statutory services) needs to be sought as to the current level of risk of an individual, and whether that can currently be safely managed.

For those joining acknowledged communities a full safer recruitment process may not always be appropriate. However, it would be accepted as good practice for those discussions to take place during the period of preparation for joining, this must be utilised to explore any issues around safeguarding, motivation, values and boundaries (see below). Once a member expresses a wish to take on a leadership position, then a safer recruitment process must be followed.

It is important to remember that Safer Recruitment and People Management does not stop when someone is appointed/admitted – it is a continuous process involving observations, discussions and feedback that lasts as long as someone is a member. This continues to ensure that those who are not suitable are not appointed/admitted, or if they are they do not stay, thus ensuring the safety of others within the community and of any users of services the community provides.

It may also be the case that, many years after joining, an individual may disclose that they are being or have previously been a victim of abuse themselves. Creating a culture and an environment where it is safe to discuss these issues is key.

Creating a healthy culture

Creating a healthy organisational culture is an essential part of safeguarding, facilitating victims and survivors of abuse to come forward and encouraging reporting of behaviours which are of concern. It relates to the nature and quality of the communications and behaviours that happen within an organisation. It involves how people treat each other and talk to each other, and whether these interactions are positive and affirming or negative and destructive. Healthy organisational cultures are compassionate and caring, open to challenge, and transparent. Unhealthy cultures are critical, closed and can generate fear or apathy. Given the acute sense of vulnerability that victims and survivors will already feel, most will be reluctant to disclose their abuse in cultures that are unhealthy. It is therefore imperative that Church bodies take active steps to ensure the health of their life together. It is also acknowledged that those communities who live together may experience tensions at varying stages, and being alive to the signs of potential bullying or harassment, and having the ability to have those conversations is even more important in these circumstances.

In terms of the sorts of discussions that can help instil this culture, there are model examples in the [Safer Recruitment and People Management](#)

Guidance, and in the [Code of Safer Working Practices](#) document. As a summary, should discussions during preparation for joining or at any point

during ongoing supervision bring to light similar behaviours to the examples below, these should be taken as warning signs and explored further, with help from the DSA if needed:

- Non-consensual touching, e.g. hugging, holding hands
- Not appreciating personal space or boundaries
- Reference to spending time alone with children/taking children away for trips
- Interest in children that is beyond what would be expected
- Unwilling to be challenged on their ideas
- Unwilling to undertake safeguarding training or appreciate its importance
- Unwilling to accept that abuse can occur in a faith setting

Section 4 - Safeguarding Learning

2 minutes read

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Requirements

4.1 Training must be delivered to the community by arrangement with the DSA for the local diocese, but in some communities this may be with the lead DSA if there is one in place.

4.1.1 This acknowledges that some recognised communities will have accommodation in different dioceses and these local links are of mutual benefit.

4.1.2 Acknowledged communities will need to make arrangements in line with section 2.2.2 above.

4.1.3 As per section 3.1.1, an assessment of the safeguarding training needs of all roles must be undertaken.

4.2 In communities who undertake work with children and vulnerable adults or have contact with children/vulnerable adults, all members must participate in the basic and foundation safeguarding learning.

4.3 Leaders of communities must have Senior Leadership safeguarding learning.

4.4 For those communities who employ staff, Safer Recruitment and People Management training must be completed in line with the current Safer Recruitment and People Management policy.

4.5 Training for those community members who are inactive, frail or sick should be considered on a case by case basis by the Leader and the DSP, and agreed with the DSA.

Good practice advice

The Church of England is introducing learning pathways which are different in important aspects to what has gone before. There is emphasis on learning being a journey rather than a one-off event, the use of a blend of learning methodologies, and a focus on personal reflection and dialogue. The aim is that such pathways should be transformative, going beyond a change in process to affecting people at the level of beliefs and values in order to achieve behavioural change.

The DSA and the DSP should agree between them the training needs of members and the way these can best be met. All training must follow the structure and methodology set out in the requirements for each module.

Post COVID-19, good use of online learning can be made in acknowledged communities, however it needs to be noted that missing out on non-verbal behaviour cues can be an issue.

Training Needs Assessments

A training needs assessment looks at each role within any community to establish what the training requirements for that role needs to be, and how they can be met.

Personal development courses are additional and depend on the career or other development needs of the individual, and particularly for DSPs, thought may need to be given as to how best to engage and join with national Church of England Safeguarding learning and events.

Visit the [Safeguarding Learning and Development portal](#)

Section 5 - Safeguarding yourself and your community

4 minutes read

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Requirements

5.1 The Leader of a recognised community has overall responsibility for ensuring the safety of their community, visitors and premises.

5.2 As a minimum, a written record of the names and contact details of any overnight visitors to recognised communities must be kept in line with data protection principles.

5.3 The DSP is responsible for ensuring that there are processes in place to keep community members and other visitors safe from visitors who may seek to cause harm.

5.3.1 This is particularly important where there are people with vulnerabilities in the community, either on a permanent or temporary basis.

5.4 Working with others, the DSP is responsible for ensuring that there are processes in place to safeguard members when they are working in the community, including where appropriate, risk assessing any premises and activities with regard to safeguarding.

Good practice advice

Religious communities differ greatly between themselves and do many great things. This section is specifically for those communities which provide some sort of service, be that within their own premises or out in the community. From a risk management perspective, the starting point is to always think “what might go wrong, and how might that be prevented?”, rather than hoping everything will go right. This should not be seen as an “add on” or a tick box exercise, but about how to integrate safer working practices into the mission and the ways of working.

Safeguarding members at premises

Those communities which have visitors come to their property, or a property they use for the purpose of delivering a service, should ensure that visitor details are kept (in line with GDPR and Data Protection guidelines). This is in case of any issues which may arise as a result of their visit, which would require you to either contact them directly, or to pass their details onto a statutory agency. In some circumstances this could simply be name and contact details, in others more information may be required, including for example, emergency contact details, proof of identity and even a very basic risk assessment. This requires a privacy notice to be in place, please refer to the main Safeguarding Children, Vulnerable People and Adults policy for more information. Where possible, it is recommended that a reference from someone in a position of authority is sought. It must never be forgotten that someone who visits a community in whatever capacity may do so to cause harm to others, and communities need to satisfy themselves that they and their other visitors are protected. This is particularly the case where vulnerable people may be part of the community for either a permanent or interim period of time, as there needs to be a clearly understood plan for ensuring their safety. The scope and size of these measures will depend entirely on the particular work the community does, and advice from the DSA should be sought where necessary.

Safeguarding members in the community

Members of communities who work with children or vulnerable adults in the community should already be safely recruited and should be involved in regular supervision discussions. For those members, and for all other members who work in the community, there should also be clear processes to safeguard them as well as those they work with. This will include, as a minimum, details of where the member will be working, who with and how long for. In certain circumstances, it may be necessary to carry out a risk assessment of the environment members will be working in, and ensure basic mitigations are taken, e.g. two people together, telephones etc. The Safer Environments and Activities policy and the Code of Safer Working Practice both have more information on this.

Safeguarding buildings and activities

The DSP should work with others to ensure that a basic risk assessment of any premises owned or used is carried out in relation to safeguarding. This is in addition to any health and safety risk assessments which must be completed. This will identify any areas of concern, for example, unsecure or hidden entrances, basic security measures on doors and windows, areas of low lighting, placement and security of toilets etc. Steps can then be taken to mitigate the risks posed by the building itself. If they are not already been carried out, risk assessments of the activities being carried out should also be completed, again so that the risk of any safeguarding incident arising is mitigated as far as possible. The [Safer Environments and Activities policy](#), and the [Code of Safer Working Practices](#) both have more information on this and model risk assessment templates are also available.

Section 6 - Reporting concerns or allegations

2 minutes read

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Requirements

6.1 Any concerns or allegations must be made to the DSP in the first instance, unless they are about the DSP in which case they should be made straight to the DSA. In an emergency, always contact the emergency services.

6.1.1 A written record of these must be kept. (Refer to the main Safeguarding policy for detailed information on data protection).

6.2 The DSP must inform the DSA/Diocesan Safeguarding Team within 24 hours (excluding weekends/bank holidays*) of any incidents or concerns. The DSP and the DSA will agree the best way forward and inform the Leader.

6.2.1 If the matter is about the Leader, the DSP must inform the DSA as normal and also the Episcopal Visitor.

6.2.2 If a matter is so urgent it cannot wait until after the weekend or Bank Holiday, contact must be made with the police or social services, and the DSA team if available.

6.2.3 It is expected that local protocols will be put in place to address the reporting of concerns, and it must be made clear that reporting a concern to the DSA cannot be overruled by anyone else in the community.

6.3 All members are required to comply with any requests for assistance from either the DSP or the DSA.

6.4 If the DSP is uncertain whether a matter should be raised with the DSA, they should raise it in any event and keep a record of the discussion.

Good practice advice

When dealing with a safeguarding matter, communities need to be mindful of the guidance set out in the [Responding Well policies](#). These matters will mostly be dealt with by the DSA, and therefore it is important that they are informed as soon as possible and within 24 hours in any event, excluding weekends and Bank Holidays.

The key thing for communities is to recognise what might constitute a situation which requires a safeguarding response. This is where being able to observe behaviours and have open discussions becomes important, as this is the opportunity to be able to spot at an early stage where things may need an intervention. This is all part of creating a healthy, safe culture.

Please refer to the main [Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults](#) policy for full examples of the behaviours, signs and situations which may give you cause for concern and which may require a safeguarding response.

If you are in any doubt about whether to report a concern, consult with your DSA and make a written record of their advice.

Section 7 - Serious Incident Reporting to the Charity Commission

1 minutes read

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Requirements

7.1 Those communities which are charities (or are overseen by and accountable to a charity) have a duty to report any serious incidents (including safeguarding) to the Charity Commission and should do so in accordance with the House of Bishops' Serious Incident Reporting Guidance for Religious Communities.

7.2 This is in addition to reporting the safeguarding incident to the DSA.

Good practice advice

For further information on how to identify and report a Serious Incident to the Charity Commission, please see the [Guidance for Religious Communities](#)

Section 8 - Episcopal Visitors

1 minutes read

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Requirements

8.1 The role of the Episcopal Visitor is to:

8.1.1 Check safeguarding policies and arrangements, including the community's safeguarding checklist/self-assessment as part of each Visitation. This includes having regard to the extent to which such policies may already reviewed by an independent body.

8.1.2 Maintain a record of the safeguarding aspects of each Visitation and share the outcome with the appropriate DSA and the diocesan bishop;

8.1.3 Inform the appropriate DSA and the diocesan bishop if they have any safeguarding concerns in relation to the community.

8.1.4 Be available to deal with any appeal subsequent to the formal complaints procedure.

8.1.5 Develop a sense of whether the community has a safe and healthy culture.

8.2 The Episcopal Visitor must be informed about any concerns if they relate to the DSP or the Leader.

Good practice advice

The Episcopal Visitor is not responsible for dealing directly with any safeguarding matters, this responsibility sits with the Diocesan Bishop. However, they must be informed of serious incidents as they have a duty to ensure that safeguarding policies and processes are in place. They must also lead discussions around how to implement healthy cultures, and must ensure this happens with the Leader and the wider community on a regular (at least annual) basis.

Appendix A - Model role descriptions/person specification for Designated Safeguarding Person

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Appendix A – Model role description/person specification for Designated Safeguarding Person

The community's Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) is the key link between the diocese and the community concerning safeguarding matters.

Person specification

1. Willingness and aptitude to undertake the role, attend the relevant training and undertake their own development in the field of safeguarding
Ability to challenge in an appropriate, supportive manner
2. Ability to challenge in an appropriate, supportive manner
3. Able to demonstrate why safeguarding is intrinsic to the Christian faith
4. Experience of being able to instigate difficult conversations
5. Able to articulate the need for culture change with regard to safeguarding in the Church as a whole, and in particular to their community
6. Demonstrate an empathetic and professional attitude when dealing with possible allegations of abuse

Role Description:

1. Be familiar with community's safeguarding policy and how it is implemented in local practice
2. Establish positive working relationships with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser
3. Discuss regularly with the Leader any safeguarding concerns or emerging issues
4. Determine which staff need which level of training and liaise with the DSA to ensure this happens
5. Have an awareness of all activities involving children and vulnerable adults, keep a record of them and assist with the safeguarding risk assessment of these activities.
6. Where appropriate, help the community develop protocols to keep themselves and their visitors safe.
7. Be the first point of contact for any safeguarding concerns the community may have.
8. Help facilitate discussions about what the community sees as a safe culture, what the current barriers are and how they may be resolved.

Download a Word version of the [model role description](#)

Appendix B - Example Implementation Checklist

1 minutes read

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Download a Word version of the [implementation self-audit checklist](#).

