



## **Diocese of Bristol Safer Recruitment Guidelines as accepted by St Luke the Evangelist Parish, Brislington October 2017. (17/62)**

### **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 licenced 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 Policy 2015'.

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.

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.

### **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.

For all lay staff and volunteers refer to the following:

### **WHERE TO START?**

The Church of England "Safer Recruitment policy June 2015" 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 CCPAS Recruiters Guide- E Bulk System.

Template recruitment forms and letters can be found in the "Safer Recruitment Policy 2015". Additional advice and alternative templates are available through the CCPAS website in the members area. Each parish will receive a log in to the site once a person has been nominated to use the CCPAS DBS system and has attended training and been registered with CCPAS.

Every organisation involved in recruitment and using DBS disclosures must have policies on Fair Recruitment of Ex Offenders and on the Handling of Disclosure Information. Both can be found, for the Diocese of Bristol, on the diocesan website. 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.

### **To summarise the process:**

**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 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?

**Use the role description to decide:** What recruitment process is required: application, interview, references, is the role DBS check eligible? 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 policy June 2015.

**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. This is your first chance to publically 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 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.

**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, what support or training might they need? Check out any gaps in employment history.

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

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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 CCPAS. Each parish will need to recruit one or more individuals to be registered with CCPAS 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. Additionally Recruiters may be nominated (ID check only). Lead Recruiters and anyone leading a recruitment process should attend Safer Recruitment/ DBS training.

Follow the CCPAS Guidance for Recruiters.

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 Adviser must be contacted with the applicant's consent. If consent is not given the individual can not proceed into the role.

Note DBS Updates: The DBS provides a service called 'Updates'. Applicants may register for this service. 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 Policy 2015. However the Diocese of Bristol will not be notified when a disclosure is obtained via the 'Updates' service and parishes are therefore advised to ensure that the date the service was used, the outcome, and the certificate number, date and type checked are recorded within the parish for future reference.

**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.

**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 5 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 says is what relevant information the police had on the day the certificate was issued. It is possible that an individual may receive a caution, conviction or 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 5 years we encourage individuals to tell us about any convictions or cautions they obtain.

**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 have basic safeguarding training during induction and attend a refresher course 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.

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 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.

### **STAFF AND HELPERS UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE:**

Age of staff and volunteers: The minimum age for a worker is 16 as 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.