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Introduction

This is a safeguarding Code of Practice issued under section 5A of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, as amended by the Safeguarding (Code of Practice) Measure 2021.

The purpose of this code

This Code imposes **requirements** on relevant persons to enable the assessment and management of safeguarding concerns and allegations. It also provides **guidance** to relevant persons on how to comply with the requirements. Both the requirements and guidance should be read together. The appendices contain further background and good practice advice.

Safeguarding is the action Church Officers take to positively promote a safer culture and encourage safe behaviours to protect people from harm. A fuller explanation of what safeguarding means in a Church context, including guidance on harm and the safeguarding continuum can be found in Safeguarding in the Church Guidance.

It has become increasingly important to distinguish the purposes of the different processes that exist in respect of safeguarding, so that people are clear what to expect from each.

- First, there is the process for responding to, assessing and managing safeguarding concerns about individuals. This process is about the identification and management of risk through the Safeguarding Casework Management Group (SCMG, previously Core Group).

- Secondly, there are the processes which focus on responsibility and accountability for actions, including the establishment of guilt. These processes include criminal investigation and prosecution, disciplinary processes for those with contracts of employment, and complaints under the Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM) for those who are ordained.

- The third process, “learning lessons”, is about taking a step back to try to understand **why** the events happened in the way they did, and what were any underlying organisational and contextual issues which contributed to them. Answering the “why” question enables an organisation to learn and make

improvements that will keep people safe in the future. Without these underlying issues being identified and addressed, there remains a risk that unsafe practice and organisational factors continue.

This Code is designed for Safeguarding Officers and those involved in the management of safeguarding cases within the Church of England. It sets out the requirements and guidance that apply to the assessment and management of safeguarding concerns and allegations involving Church Officers; while also providing guidance on managing risks posed by other individuals who attend church, this covers both recent and non-recent matters.

The Code **aims** to ensure that:

- any safeguarding risks are identified, assessed and managed appropriately;
- where required, statutory services are informed and involved, and there is ongoing partnership work with those agencies to ensure the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults;
- complainants (individuals who raise concerns or allegations) and respondents (individuals who are the subjects of concerns or allegations) receive appropriate and coordinated responses, that have regard to their wellbeing; and
- all safeguarding concerns or allegations are assessed and managed, regardless of whether a threshold for disciplinary action against the subject of the concern or allegation has been met, which is particularly important from a prevention perspective.

This Code is **not**:

- a criminal justice process – Where appropriate, an investigation will be carried out by the police and may be followed by prosecution.
- a disciplinary process – The processes set out in the Code do not replace the church's disciplinary processes, any human resource policies and procedures, and any other local disciplinary policies.
- a replacement for the child and adult protection functions of statutory agencies, such as the police or local authority services.

However, the processes outlined in this Code complement any action undertaken by statutory services such as police investigations or assessments by social services. Where relevant, the procedures outlined in this Code should inform and assist both secular and church disciplinary procedures and as far as possible should take place at the same time.

Overriding principles

The Church is not a single or uniform entity, but a multitude of organisations and communities bound together by the love for God and the commitment to Christian values. Church Bodies are supported by a range of individuals and roles, including those who are office holders, employees, volunteers and those in elected roles. In addition, the Church serves parishioners and opens its doors to anyone who wishes to worship God. It is important, therefore, that safeguarding processes recognise this diversity and ensure that any risk assessment and management processes applied are tailored to specific roles and proportionate to the degree to which someone is involved with the Church.

The overriding principles under this Code are:

1. The safety and wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults is paramount.
2. Consistent with Christian theology and acceptance that each human being is made in the image of God, complainants, respondents and others impacted by the concern or allegation will be treated with dignity and respect.
3. Complainants and respondents will have access to appropriate support whilst action under this Code is undertaken, recognising the potential of these processes to cause distress and lead to trauma.
4. Where the subject of a safeguarding allegation has themselves experienced abuse, their role as a respondent and their experience as a victim or survivor must be treated as distinct and handled separately. Where such information is known, it should be handled sensitively and must not shape or extend the scope of the investigation into the safeguarding allegation. Regardless of the outcome of the allegation, a Church Officer in this position retains full entitlement to support.
5. The primacy of statutory processes and services is recognised, and responses to complainants and respondents should meet legal requirements and be underpinned by guidance from the relevant statutory authorities (e.g. the police, social care).
6. Effective partnership work, within the Church and with relevant organisations and professionals outside of the Church, is key in ensuring that risks are effectively managed, processes are not duplicated, and complainants and respondents receive coordinated responses.
7. The safeguarding processes under this Code should be carried out in a transparent manner, and complainants and respondents will have access to information explaining these processes.

8. Complainants and respondents will have the opportunity to state their views, be listened to and be heard.
9. The safeguarding processes under this Code should be conducted efficiently and seek to avoid delays.
10. Clear records should be maintained at all stages, including records of key decisions, referrals and outcomes for all cases.
11. Whilst the requirements set out in this Code must be followed, in certain circumstances, flexibility can be applied to meet the specific needs of individual complainants and respondents, or in order to apply the Code effectively in specific Church settings. This can only be done on the advice of the statutory services or a Regional Safeguarding Lead (on behalf of the NST)

Legal framework

Section 5A of Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, was inserted by the Safeguarding (Code of Practice) Measure 2021 and came into force on 1 March 2022.

The provisions replace the former “duty to have due regard” with a duty for all relevant persons to comply with the requirements of a Code.

Where a requirement is imposed the Code also gives guidance on how relevant persons can comply with the requirement. The guidance sets out some good practice examples and explains why the requirement is necessary. In other words, it explains “why and how” to deliver the requirements. **All requirements are marked as such and are contained in a blue box.**

Who is a relevant person?

Each of the following is a "relevant person":

a) a clerk in Holy Orders who is authorised to officiate in accordance with the Canons;
b) an archbishop;
c) a diocesan, suffragan or assistant bishop;
d) an archdeacon;
e) a person who is licensed to exercise the office of reader or serve as a lay worker;
f) a churchwarden;
g) a parochial church council;
h) the Chapter of a cathedral;
i) the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) for a diocese;
j) the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) for a diocese;
k) any other diocesan body as defined by section 19 (1) of the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007;
l) a body established to carry out a mission initiative as defined by section 80 (1) of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011;
m) a person who is an officer or member of staff of the Archbishops' Council, or who provides services to the Archbishops' Council, and whose work to any extent relates to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults; and
n) a person who works (on any basis) in a diocese or parish, or at a cathedral or for the purposes of a mission initiative, and whose work to any extent relates to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

At diocesan and parish level, different terms may be used to describe a lay worker or reader, according to a particular missional need. However, for the purposes of being a relevant person, the provisions extend to those who have been licensed to the office of reader or to serve as a lay worker by the bishop under Canon E 5 or E 6.

It is important to note that the relevant person is the one who has responsibility for making the requirement happen, and who has the ultimate accountability if it doesn't. That does not mean they are necessarily the person who will carry out the requirement. For example, if a Bishop is a relevant person for a particular requirement, in practice this might be delegated to, for example, an Archdeacon.

Enforcement

Failure by a member of the clergy to comply with a requirement under this Code may constitute misconduct. Failure by a reader or lay worker to comply with a requirement may be grounds for the revocation of that reader's or lay worker's licence. Other officers, such as Churchwardens, may be suspended from office for failing to comply with a requirement under the Code. Breaches by trustee bodies, such as a Parochial Church Council (PCC) or a Cathedral Chapter may also trigger an intervention by the Charity Commission.

Application in the Diocese in Europe

This Code must be followed in all the dioceses in the Church of England, including the Diocese in Europe. It is recognised that the legal and regulatory framework within which the Diocese in Europe operates differs from that in England. Where local law or local arrangements require a different approach to meeting the requirements of this Code, the underlying safeguarding purpose and intent of the requirement must still be achieved. Any such adaptations must be recorded and include a clear rationale explaining how the purpose of the requirement has been met.

Such considerations may include, but are not limited to:

1. **Different terminology** – where the Code uses the terms "parish", "priest / vicar" and "Parish Safeguarding Officer", these should be understood as "chaplaincy", "chaplain", "Chaplaincy Safeguarding Officer" or any other such terms that are used locally and would be regarded as being of equivalent status, role and responsibilities.

2. **Legal and regulatory frameworks** - references to legislation, statutory guidance and statutory partners, agencies or services may be understood as the relevant equivalents within the respective country or territory in which a Diocese in Europe chaplaincy operates. This includes safeguarding, criminal, employment and data protection legislation. Local legal requirements may affect how concerns are reported, information is shared and cases are managed.

3. **Alternative reporting route**s – Where local statutory agencies are unavailable, unable to respond appropriately, or where engaging with them would create additional safeguarding risks, reasonable steps must be taken to identify an appropriate lawful reporting route which achieves the safeguarding purpose of this Code. This may

include seeking advice from the Diocese in Europe Safeguarding Team, relevant national or international law enforcement agencies, or British diplomatic or consular services, where appropriate.

4. **Alternative support and risk management mechanisms** – Where it is not possible to make a statutory notification and/or obtain an appropriate statutory response, the written rationale should also include details of the alternative support and risk management measures that have been taken. This may include making referrals to local specialist services or providing bespoke guidance and/or material support to mitigate risk.

The structure of the Code

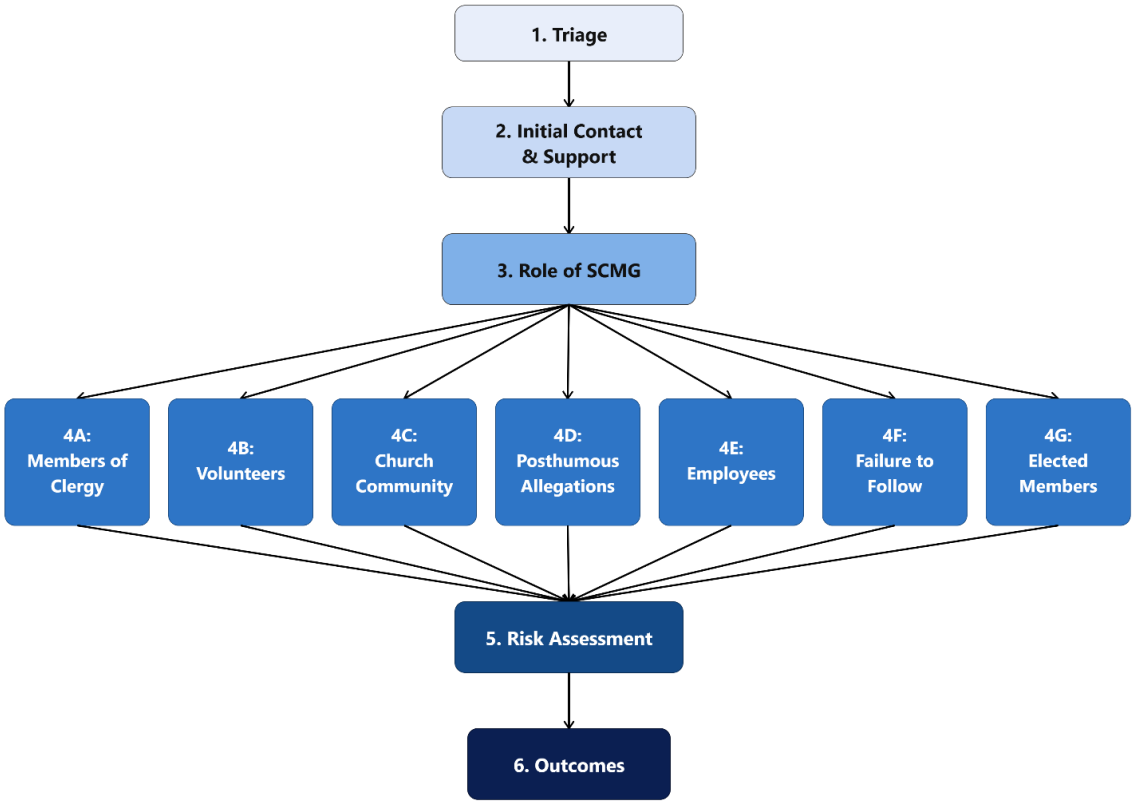
This Code is structured into six sections, and includes core sections which apply to all allegations or concerns (green), and role specific pathways (yellow):

- **Section 1 – Triage:** Outlines the initial steps that need to be taken, including guidance on how to determine which concerns or allegations are safeguarding matters and managed under this Code. It also provides guidance on how to respond to concerns or allegations about individuals who do not have a role in the Church.
- **Section 2 – Initial Contact and Support:** Outlines the initial steps to be taken in each case, including what support should be offered.
- **Section 3 - The Role of the Safeguarding Case Management Group:** Provides the general operating principles for Safeguarding Case Management Groups (SCMGs, formerly known as Core Groups), which play a key role in the management of safeguarding concerns or allegations within the Church.

- **Section 4 – Pathways:** These pathways detail the specific steps that need to be undertaken when managing safeguarding concerns / allegations about Church Officers depending on their role in the Church:
  - **Section 4A:** Members of Clergy
  - **Section 4B:** Volunteers
  - **Section 4C:** Managing risk in the Church Community
  - **Section 4D:** Managing posthumous allegations
  - **Section 4E:** Employees

- **Section 4F:** Failure to follow Safeguarding Guidance and Requirements
- **Section 4G:** Elected Members

- **Section 5 – Risk Assessment:** Sets out the principles and processes to be followed when assessing and managing risk.
- **Section 6 – Outcomes, Closure and long-term risk management:** General outline of how cases should be closed including resolutions and apologies.



Determining the applicable pathway

Where a respondent's role in the church has changed since the act or omission took place, the pathway is determined by reference to the time the safeguarding intervention is taking place, not the time when the act or omission took place. For example, where an allegation relates to events that occurred while the respondent was an ordinand, Section 4A (Members of Clergy) applies.

Terminology

Bishop: This means the diocesan bishop, or where those functions have been delegated to another bishop, that person. Where the word bishop appears, it should be read to include 'archbishop', unless expressly stated otherwise.

Cathedral Safeguarding Officer (CSO): The person who maintains oversight of, leads and advises on safeguarding matters in a cathedral. A Cathedral Safeguarding Officer could be a member of a Diocesan Safeguarding Team or could be an officer employed directly by a cathedral.

Church Bodies: For the purposes of this Code, the term "Church Bodies" means Parochial Church Councils (PCCs, including District Church Councils and Guild Church Councils, or similar bodies), diocesan bodies (including Diocesan Boards of Finance [DBFs] and Diocesan Boards of Education [DBEs]), cathedrals, religious communities, mission initiatives (for example a Bishops Misson Order, BMO), and the National Church Institutions (NCIs).

Church Officer: Any person appointed or elected by, or on behalf of, the Church to a post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid. This covers a wide range of roles and is in effect anyone who is not purely a member of the congregation. This will therefore include clergy, staff, volunteers and elected members but would not include third party contractors.

Complainant: An individual who brings forward a safeguarding concern or allegation or is alleged to have suffered abuse as a result of their engagement in the Church. The use of this term seeks to ensure that a degree of objectivity is maintained throughout the safeguarding process. It does not imply that a "complainant" is not a victim or survivor. The use of the term "complainants", instead of "victims" or "survivors", was a recommendation in past Lessons Learnt Case Reviews.

Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP): An independent advisory body offering external oversight and scrutiny to the diocese regarding safeguarding.

Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO): The person who maintains oversight of, leads and advises on safeguarding matters in a diocese. The functions of the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) are set out in the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer Regulations 2024

*Note: DSOs have the authority to delegate tasks that would otherwise be their responsibility to **Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Officers (ADSOs**), as and when they see appropriate. ADSOs are not specifically referenced in this Code, but where a requirement is included that requires the DSO to undertake a certain action, the DSO can delegate that action to an ADSO within their team.*

Harm: For the purposes of safeguarding, harm means any act or omission that results in, or is likely to result in, abuse, neglect, exploitation or ill-treatment, causing impairment to an individual's physical, psychological, emotional, financial or spiritual wellbeing.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): The individual employed by a Local Authority who is responsible for overseeing allegations against adults who work with children.

National Safeguarding Casework Management System (NSCMS, My Concern): The system used by the dioceses, cathedrals and the NST to monitor safeguarding cases.

National Safeguarding Team (NST):[1] The Church of England's central safeguarding provision, supporting policy development, training, major projects and investigating cases against senior clergy (e.g. bishops and deans), and cases where there is a high degree of interest or complexity.

Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO): This role is the first point of contact in a parish for all safeguarding matters. This includes receiving disclosures, managing Church Safety Plans and maintaining records.

Relevant person: Any person or body that falls within any of the categories listed in section 5A(2) of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016.

Respondent: An individual who is the subject to a safeguarding concern or allegation.

Safeguarding: The action Church Officers take to positively promote a safer culture and encourage safe behaviours to protect people from harm. For a fuller explanation of safeguarding in a Church context, please refer to the *Safeguarding in the Church* Guidance.

Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG): Previously known as a Core Group, the group that is set up to work with the Safeguarding Officer to assess and manage risk on receipt of an allegation.

Safeguarding concern or allegation: A safeguarding concern arises where someone has suspicions about a person or situation, but the reason has not yet been established. For example, there may be concerns about a child who often comes to Sunday School upset, dirty and hungry. An allegation is a more definite assertion, for example, if someone is witnessed hitting a child. For ease of reading, the term "safeguarding allegation" is used throughout, and is to be taken to include safeguarding concerns. The term "allegation" does not imply that the

[1] For further information on specific responsibilities, please see Key Roles and Responsibilities of Church Office Holders and Bodies Practice Guidance.pdf (churchofengland.org)

matter has been proven, or that the Respondent(s) have done anything wrong. It refers to a concern involving an identified person who may be a source of risk or harm.

Safeguarding Officer: This term is used throughout this document to mean both the Diocesan and the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer, as appropriate in the context.

Section 1: Triage and Referrals

This is a Core Pathway and must be followed for all allegations

Section 1: Triage and Referrals

- 1.1.1 Triaging safeguarding concerns and allegations
- 1.1.2,1.1.3 Responding to safeguarding allegations not involving a Church Officer
- 1.1.4 -1.1.6 Referrals to the National Safeguarding Team
- 1.1.7 Case transfer and handover protocol
- 1.1.8 CSO and DSO responsibilities
- 1.1.9 Allegations across more than one diocese
- 1.1.10, 1.1.11 Statutory Referrals
- 1.1.12 Safeguarding Serious Incident reporting to the Charity Commission

Section 2. Initial Contact and Support

Section 3: Safeguarding Case Management Group

Section 4: Pathways

Section 5: Risk Assessment

Section 6: Outcomes, Closure and Long-term risk management

Requirements:

Triage

1.1.1 On receiving a safeguarding allegation, the Safeguarding Officer must:

- consider whether anyone is at immediate risk of harm or danger and, where this is the case, contact the police or other emergency services without delay;
- consider whether the case may meet the threshold for referral to statutory services, to be confirmed in line with 1.1.10; and
- decide whether the matter falls within the scope of this Code, using the Threshold Tool to inform that decision.

1.1.2 If the Safeguarding Officer determines that the allegation does not fall within the scope of this Code, the Safeguarding Officer must refer the allegation to the appropriate person or body within and/or outside of the Church.

1.1.3 The referral must be in writing and a record of it kept by the Safeguarding Officer.

1.1.4 If the Safeguarding Officer considers that an allegation meets the criteria in 1.1.5, they must refer it to the National Safeguarding Team (NST).

1.1.5 The Safeguarding Officer must consider the criteria for referral to the NST, which are that:

- an allegation has been made about an archbishop, a bishop or a dean; or in some circumstances, the leader or a religious community;
- the case involves allegations across several dioceses and has additional complexities;
- the allegation is high profile and of significant national interest and has additional complexities; or
- the allegation has significant complexities, for instance arising from multiple conflicts of interest.

1.1.6 The NST must decide whether it will take responsibility for the case management of the respective allegation, and if they do not, they must refer the case back and ensure the rationale is recorded.

1.1.7 Where responsibility for case management transfers between Safeguarding Officers or safeguarding teams, a handover must take place in line with the Safeguarding Case Handover Protocol.

1.1.8 If the allegation refers to a Church Officer in a cathedral and that cathedral has a CSO, the CSO must discuss the matter with the DSO. The CSO and the DSO must agree on the course of action and who will lead on what aspect.

1.1.9 Where an allegation involves multiple dioceses, the Safeguarding Officer in those dioceses must work collaboratively and must agree which diocese will take the lead coordinating role and how responsibilities will be shared. The rationale for which diocese takes the lead must be recorded.

Referrals

1.1.10 For all safeguarding allegations, the Safeguarding Officer must:

- consider whether any referrals to statutory services are needed;
- make any required referrals; and
- keep a record of their decision and rationale for referring / not referring a matter to statutory services; and
- Where a referral has been made, and a timely response has not been received, or the referral has been closed, consider whether escalation is required and ensure they receive a clear rationale for the statutory body's decision; where the decision is not to escalate, this must be recorded with the rationale.

1.1.11 The Safeguarding Officer must explore what information is held in respect of the respondent and, if that information could be relevant to a police or social services investigation, they must share it with the relevant authorities.

1.1.12 Church Bodies that are relevant persons must assess if an allegation constitutes a Safeguarding Serious Incident, in which case, it must be reported to the Charity Commission.

1.1.13 Where a Safeguarding Officer becomes aware that a subject of concern has relocated, or intends to relocate abroad, they must notify the NST.

Guidance

1.1.1 – Triaging safeguarding concerns and allegations

What is a safeguarding concern or allegation

A safeguarding concern arises where someone has suspicions about a person or situation, but the reason has not yet been established. For example, there may be concerns about a child who often comes to Sunday School upset, dirty and hungry. An allegation is a more definite assertion, for example, if someone is witnessed hitting a child.

Not every incident involving harm will constitute a safeguarding concern or allegation for the purpose of this Code. Harm may require a different organisational response, including conduct or disciplinary processes, pastoral support, or Health and Safety procedures. However, a Safeguarding Officer must assess all referrals to ensure that a decision and rationale can be recorded.

Immediate risk and statutory threshold

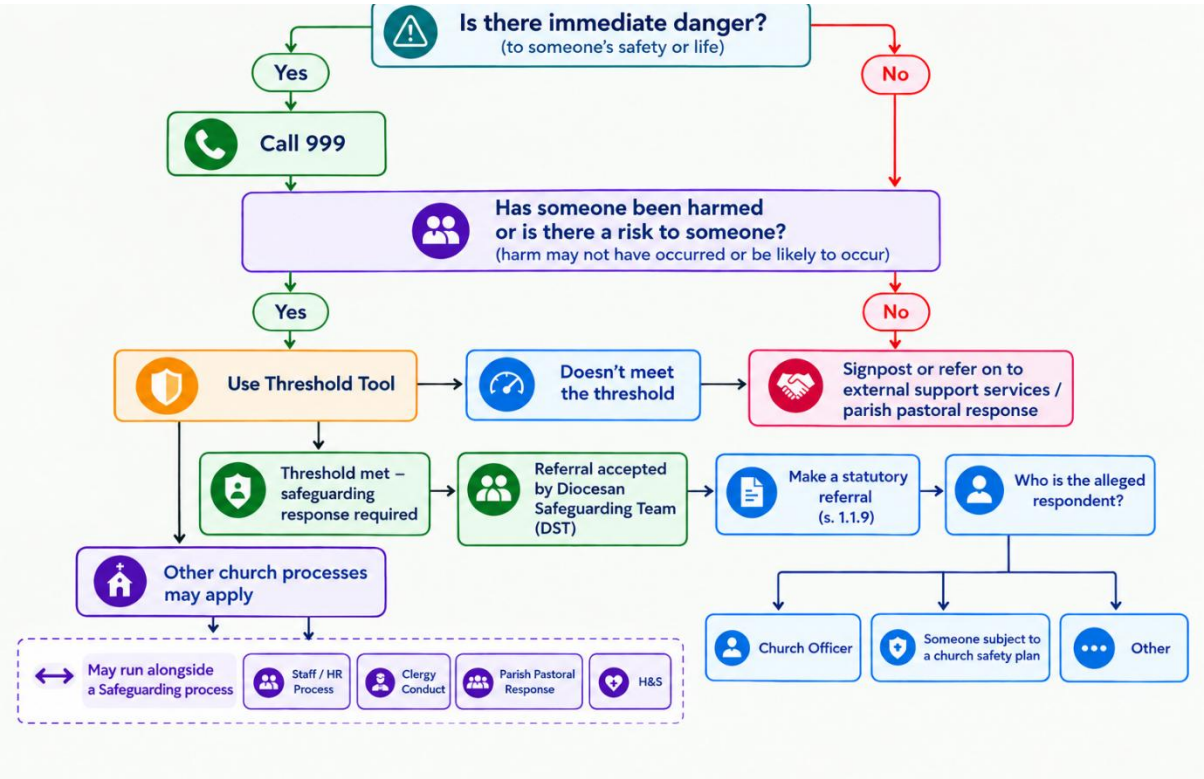
In the first instance of a safeguarding allegation being received, the primary consideration must always be whether an individual is at immediate risk of harm. Where there is a concern that this may be the case, the Safeguarding Officer must contact the police or other emergency services in line with the *Reporting Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations* Code of Practice. Alongside this, the Safeguarding Officer must consider whether the case may meet the threshold for referral to statutory services; see section 1.1.10.

Relevant statutory services may include Children's Services, Adult Social Care or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), depending on the nature of the concern or allegation and those involved. Where a referral is made, or where a decision is taken not to refer, this must be recorded in the case management system along with the rationale. See section 1.1.10 for guidance on threshold criteria and decision-making.

Definitions and advice on how to recognise the signs of different types of abuse can be found in the Safeguarding in the Church guidance. This includes statutory definitions of abuse.

Confirming the pathway

Where a concern is determined to be a safeguarding matter the allegation continues under this Code and is allocated to the relevant pathway. Further support on determining the appropriate safeguarding response can be found in the Threshold Tool.



Following this triage process, responsibility for the next stage of the response should be clearly identified. Where the decision is for the matter to be referred to another Church process, this must be recorded, including the rationale for the decision, the responsible person taking the matter forward, and any ongoing role the Safeguarding Officer will have, if any.

The complainant should be informed, as appropriate, which process will be followed, who will be responsible for progressing it, and what immediate next steps will be taken, where possible.

Who is a "vulnerable adult"?

The term vulnerable adult is used in section 6 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 to mean:

a person aged 18 or over whose ability to protect himself or herself from violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation is significantly impaired through physical or mental disability or illness, old age, emotional fragility or distress, or otherwise; and for that purpose, the reference to being impaired is to being temporarily or indefinitely impaired.

A broad approach should be taken to the question of vulnerability which, as the statutory definition makes clear, may arise in a variety of ways. Whilst the level of impairment is required to be significant the circumstances that give rise to it are wide. These include characteristics inherent to the adult such as age or disability but also factors such as illness, emotional fragility or merely distress. The nature of the impairment may be temporary or indefinite.

Care should be taken not to deem every adult as vulnerable merely because of the circumstances of the concern or allegation. However, it is important to note that the question of vulnerability is assessed at the time of the Church's intervention, not when the act or omission took place. This recognises that a person who may not be vulnerable at the time of an act or omission may become vulnerable as a result of it, necessitating a safeguarding response from the Church.

It is for the Safeguarding Officer to determine in every case whether the response sits best with the procedures set out in the *Managing Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations* Code, whether it is better dealt with under HR policies or procedures, or whether some other response is needed.

Further guidance on definitions and statutory thresholds can be found in Safeguarding in the Church guidance.

Wider conduct and capability issues

There are times where wider conduct and capability issues will be reported as a safeguarding allegation. There are various reasons why this happens, such as a lack of understanding of safeguarding, a belief that the matter will be dealt with more swiftly, or unclear boundaries between Safeguarding and other departments within a Church Body. The Safeguarding Officer will use their professional judgement to decide in these situations whether or not an allegation qualifies as safeguarding or should be dealt with by Human Resources (HR), or in some cases, by the ministry office or Archdeacon.

The interface between safeguarding and other functions, such as HR processes, must also be considered when deciding if the information received constitutes a safeguarding allegation. Issues that do not involve children, young people and vulnerable adults will generally be better

dealt with under a HR policy or procedure. However, if potentially abusive behaviours become known, these may be indicators that require evaluation by a Safeguarding Officer to ascertain if the issue requires a safeguarding response, before being dealt with under non-safeguarding frameworks. Close working relations between the Safeguarding Officers and other relevant functions within a Church Body are essential when making a decision in these circumstances.

Deciding whether the matter falls within scope

The following additional questions may be useful for a Safeguarding Officer when making an assessment whether a matter is a safeguarding one:

Is the allegation that a Church Officer has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed or may harm a child, young person or vulnerable adult?
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, young person or vulnerable adult? where the Respondent holds a Position of Trust, this may meet the criminal offence threshold regardless of the young person's age, see section 4A.
- behaved towards a child, young person or vulnerable adult in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm?
- behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children / young people or vulnerable adults? or
- incited another person to harm or behave in a way that may have harmed a child, young person or vulnerable adult?

This set of questions highlights the need to consider the potential for further harm to others, not just the harm that is alleged to have already been inflicted. For instance, when dealing with a person who is alleged to have committed non-recent sexual offences against children in a non-faith context, consideration should be given to potential risk in a church context.

Low Level Concerns

Finally, there may be safeguarding allegations which are "low level"[2], that is, they do not meet the threshold which would warrant intervention from a Safeguarding Officer, or indeed statutory services. These allegations, however, do need to be raised with the Safeguarding Officer for them to record. This is because multiple low-level concerns about an individual

[2] Responding to low-level concerns in education | NSPCC Learning

may in fact demonstrate a pattern of behaviour that represents a real risk of harm when looked at overall.

Seeking further information or advice

Although the decision whether to treat a matter as “safeguarding” or “not safeguarding” sits with the Safeguarding Officer, there will be situations where a Safeguarding Officer might need to seek further information or advice in order to make that assessment. In such cases, the Safeguarding Officer may consider:

- asking follow-up questions to the person raising the allegation, that can help them determine the nature of the allegation;
- engaging in preliminary discussions with relevant individuals or departments within the Church Body and potentially outside, for example the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or other children/adult social care services;
- consulting the person responsible for providing them with casework supervision;
- consulting with the RSL or NST.

There may be a limited number of cases where an SCMG needs to be called to determine if an issue is safeguarding or not, however the timeliness of these meetings happening needs to be considered.

At this stage, when consulting with others, a decision needs to be made whether it is necessary to share personal or identifiable information about the complainant and respondent, and the requirements under data protection legislation should be taken into account.[3]

Civil actions and insurance claims

Sometimes a safeguarding allegation will be accompanied by a claim for damages by way of a civil action. Whilst this falls outside the scope of this Code, some general guidance is set out in Appendix 1.

[3] An Internal Information Sharing Plan is in place between dioceses, the NST and the Church in Wales, which Safeguarding Officers can refer to when making this decision. Further guidance on sharing information with the police can be found here.

1.1.2, 1.1.3 - Responding to safeguarding concerns or allegations that do not involve Church Officers or individuals

Where a safeguarding allegation is made against someone who is not a Church Officer, Safeguarding Officers must make every effort to signpost, refer or enable access to appropriate support for the person raising the allegation and the complainant. Sometimes, this might be done by a Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) or a different designated safeguarding volunteer or member of staff. However, PSOs and other designated roles should consult with Safeguarding Officers, record the advice that they are given, and the actions that they subsequently take. This should not replace the need to act without delay where there is an immediate risk of harm and refer matters to emergency services.

The support that can be offered in these cases includes:

- supporting the complainant to identify the services which may be relevant for them and that may be able to address any allegations;
- helping the complainant to identify the services that may be able to provide them with practical, emotional and other support during this time;
- sharing with the complainant information and contact details for such services;
- supporting the complainant to get in touch with those services, including making initial contact with those services on behalf of the complainant, with their knowledge and agreement and / or
- potentially maintaining contact with the complainant, if they express that preference, whilst they are waiting to hear back from those services, to ensure that any deterioration in their circumstances that may give rise to an immediate risk of harm to them or those close to them (e.g. their children or someone they care for) can be reported to the relevant statutory authorities.

It is important to note that the requirements around reporting to statutory services still apply, even if a concern is not related to a Church Officer. However, the Safeguarding Officer's involvement following a referral in such circumstances, will likely be limited.

Allegations about collective decision making by a corporate body such as a PCC, DBF or all other trustee bodies, are outside the scope of this Code. This is because the Code applies to safeguarding concerns or allegations involving individuals, not to decisions made collectively by a corporate body. The appropriate route for dealing with a collective decision made by a charity is through the Charity Commission, or through the body's own complaints procedure if they are not a charity.

1.1.4 - 1.1.6 - Referrals to the National Safeguarding Team

Where the NST takes the lead coordinating role regarding the management of a case, the NST Caseworker(s) involved will work closely with the relevant Safeguarding Officers. Where the NST assesses that the case does not meet its criteria, an explanation should be provided to the relevant Church Bodies in writing. Where the diocese believes that the NST should be taking the case, a final decision will be made by the National Director of Safeguarding. Even if the NST does not take the lead coordinating role in the management of a case, it can provide support to a Church Body that is managing a complex case.

In cases in which the NST takes the lead coordinating role, **requirements relating to Safeguarding Officers should be read to mean the NST Caseworker**. However, some actions may still need to be undertaken by the Safeguarding Officers in the relevant dioceses or Church Bodies, and where this is the case, this will be discussed with them. Joint working arrangements will be decided on a case-by-case basis and confirmed in writing.

Where relevant, specific considerations for cases managed by the NST (for example the membership of Safeguarding Case Management Groups) are included throughout this Code.

1.1.7 - Case transfer and handover protocol

The Safeguarding Case Handover Protocol sets out the minimum expectations for how safeguarding cases are transferred between Safeguarding Officers or safeguarding teams, including between dioceses/cathedrals and the NST.

Where responsibility for case management transfers between Safeguarding Officers or safeguarding teams, effective handover is essential to ensure continuity of safeguarding oversight, robust risk management, and clarity for those involved. Church bodies should ensure that this Protocol is embedded within local safeguarding arrangements, and that Safeguarding Officers follow it.

The Protocol sets a minimum standard for when a handover is required, who is responsible for initiating and completing it, how urgency is assessed, and how safeguarding risk is managed during periods of transfer. Local arrangements may add further detail but must meet this standard.

Supporting tools or templates may be used to facilitate timely and accurate sharing of key safeguarding information and to support clear communication with the complainant and

respondent during transfer of case responsibility, including where this occurs as part of the SCMG process.

1.1.8 - The split in responsibilities between the CSO and the DSO

There may be different arrangements in place regarding the management of safeguarding allegations that involve Church Officers in cathedrals. In some areas, Diocesan Safeguarding Officers provide these services for cathedrals, whilst some cathedrals employ their own Cathedral Safeguarding Officer (CSO).

It is good practice and strongly encouraged for a diocese and a cathedral to have a service-level agreement or a memorandum of understanding in place that clarifies expectations regarding the services that a DSO or a Diocesan Safeguarding Team may deliver for the cathedral, including the split in roles and responsibilities between the DSO and the CSO. This includes a clear split in responsibilities in relation to the management of safeguarding allegations whilst being aware that some actions, including clergy risk assessments, must be carried out by a DSO.

1.1.9 - Allegations spanning more than one diocese

The general practice is that the diocese where the allegation arises should take the lead. However, it may be the case that this diocese holds none of the relevant information about the case, in which case there is logic in it being the diocese where most of the information resides which takes the lead. The matter may also need to involve the diocese(s) where the complainant and respondent now live. In these cases, there needs to be discussion as to who should take the lead, and who will undertake which particular functions. The rationale for this must always be recorded, and the complainant and respondent made aware of who is involved and why.

1.1.10, 1.1.11 - Statutory Referrals

Safeguarding Officers should keep their knowledge regarding thresholds for referrals to statutory services up to date. Thresholds for social care referrals are published by individual local authorities, as part of their local safeguarding procedures for children, young people and

vulnerable adults. Where a Safeguarding Officer is unsure if a referral should be made, they should seek advice from the relevant statutory service. There will also be cases where referrals need to be made to the LADO.

For guidance on making referrals to the DBS for barring, see Section 9 of the Safer Recruitment and People Management guidance. Referrals to the DBS should not only be considered towards the end of a safeguarding process, but at key points during the process and specifically when a member of clergy or ordinand is suspended or temporarily withdrawn from regulated activity.

Statutory bodies retain investigative authority, but making a referral does not transfer or pause the Church's own safeguarding responsibility. The duty to assess and manage risk continues throughout, and a slow or absent statutory response is a reason to act. Guidance on how to review, escalate, and record these decisions can be found in the Escalation Framework, supplementary to this Code.

1.1.12 - Safeguarding Serious Incident reporting to the Charity Commission

The Church has worked with the Charity Commission to agree bespoke guidance for Diocesan Boards of Finance (DBFs), PCCs, religious communities, Diocesan Boards of Education (DBEs), and cathedrals, on how to identify and report a Safeguarding Serious Incident. Church Bodies should follow this guidance when considering a potential Safeguarding Serious Incident.

Section 2: Initial contact and support

This is a Core Pathway and must be followed for all allegations, unless otherwise explicitly stated.

Section 1: Triage and Referrals

Section 2: Initial Contact and support

2.1 When to make initial contact with the complainant and respondent

2.2 Initial Contact: Support and well-being

2.3 -2.7 Link Persons

Section 3: Safeguarding Case Management Group

Section 4: Pathways

Section 5: Risk Assessment

Section 6: Outcomes, Closure and Long-term risk management

Requirements:

Initial contact

2.1 The Safeguarding Officer must decide how and when to make initial contact with the complainant and with the respondent.

2.2 The Safeguarding Officer's initial contact with both parties must focus on support and wellbeing. The Safeguarding Officer must:

- explain what information has been brought to their attention;
- explain confidentiality and its limitations;
- allow the complainant/respondent to recount any information about the allegation that they wish to share at this stage;
- explain any referrals that have been, or may need to be, made to statutory authorities and the links between these and the Church's safeguarding and disciplinary processes;
- consider any support that the complainant or respondent may need and enable them to access it, in line with the relevant policy and guidance;
- explain what will happen next with regard to the Church's safeguarding processes, including timescales (as far as they are known and can be anticipated), and who has and will be informed including who is, or will be, part of the Safeguarding Case Management Group, if known at this stage;
- make the complainant aware that the respondent will be informed and explain what information will be shared and when, unless there are clear reasons why this would not be appropriate (for example, where doing so would increase risk or prejudice statutory processes);
- explain what the Church's safeguarding processes can and cannot achieve;
- inform the complainant/respondent they can bring a companion with them to any meetings for support;
- establish the person's preferences for communication;
- discuss what support their immediate family / dependants may need, and signpost or refer them to relevant support services; and
- ensure that the key relevant information from the list above is also provided to the complainant and the respondent in writing.

Link Persons

2.3 The Safeguarding Officer must ensure that the support of a Link Person is offered to all respondents who are Church Officers.

2.4 The Bishop must ensure that suitable and trained Link Persons are available to support respondents, and that appropriate oversight of them is in place.

2.5 The Bishop must ensure that all individuals appointed to be a Link Person have completed the NST Link Person Training.

2.6 Where a respondent is assigned a Link Person, the Safeguarding Officer must provide written information about the role of the Link Person and the way in which any information shared with the Link Person will be recorded, shared and used.

Guidance

2.1 - When to make initial contact with the complainant and respondent

The timing of this decision must be informed by:

- advice from the police and other statutory services (if involved), to ensure that statutory processes are not undermined;
- the complainant's wellbeing and personal circumstances, including any known welfare needs;
- the safety of the complainant, including the nature of the allegation and any risks that may arise from making contact.

A trauma-informed approach must be embraced when establishing contact with the complainant and support must be offered in line with the requirements and guidance set out in the Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse guidance. The different support options should be presented to the complainant in enough detail to enable to them to choose the options that best meet their needs. See 2.2 - Initial Contact: Support and well-being for more information.

In cases in which the complainant is the spouse of a member of clergy and that relationship is breaking down (or has broken down), the Policy and Guidance for the Church of England in the care of the spouses and partners of divorced and separated clergy must be followed.

When gaining an initial account of the allegation from the complainant, the Safeguarding Officer should consider their needs and the potential impact that the alleged abuse might have had on the person's ability to engage with the process, their desire to offer a full disclosure, and their ability to fully recall the details of the allegation. Complainants should be given the space and time to disclose and engage with the process at their own pace.

In situations in which a complainant does not wish to be contacted by the Safeguarding Officer and does not want to be involved in the assessment of an allegation, the Safeguarding Officer should respect their choice. However, they should discuss with the complainant that they will still need to follow the relevant safeguarding processes to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults are protected. The complainant's preference not to be involved in these processes might mean that any action undertaken is limited, due to limited information being available. Nevertheless, the Safeguarding Officer continues to have a duty to consider such information, follow the relevant processes and ensure that any risk is assessed and managed.

In the initial correspondence to the complainant and respondent it should be made clear that any evidence gathered through the SCMG procedure may be relied upon in later processes, including any disciplinary process

Gathering relevant information

Following the initial record checks and discussions with the complainant and the respondent, subsequent safeguarding enquiries may include, but are not limited to:

- a more thorough verification of existing records;
- receiving and reviewing additional records from all parties involved, including from statutory services;
- receiving written or recorded statements from the complainant / respondent;
- carrying out interviews with the complainant, the respondent, any witnesses and any other relevant individuals, in order to gather other relevant information.

From the complainant

Sharing experiences of abuse can be a painful and re-traumatising experience, and it is for this reason that the wellbeing of the complainant should be prioritised during any engagement. At the outset, the Safeguarding Officer should assess the risk of the complainant being re-traumatised through this process and discuss with them what measures might help minimise this. The Safeguarding Officer should embrace a trauma-informed approach and take the time to listen to the complainant and allow them to continue at their own pace. The Safeguarding Officer should offer the complainant different ways in which they can feed back their experiences and views, such as in a face-to-face or online meeting, in writing, or in video / audio recording format, provided that these means allow for the Safeguarding Officer to collate all the information that they need.

Some complainants may struggle to recall the full details of their experiences, particularly in cases involving non-recent abuse. This may be due to their memory becoming fragmented as a trauma response, or due to the difficulty in re-telling a traumatic experience. Offering them the option to meet multiple times over a period of time can ensure that the complainant feels that their voice has been heard, their wellbeing is supported, and the Safeguarding Officer gains a full account of the allegation. This does need to be balanced with the need for the process to be delivered in a timely manner and the wellbeing of the respondent. To this end, the Safeguarding Officer should discuss with the complainant their needs and preferences and agree an end point. The Safeguarding Officer should, wherever possible, check with the complainant that they have completely and accurately taken down the information which it has been provided. A written version of this can be provided at the complainant's request.

From the respondent

Respondents must be offered opportunities to respond to the allegations made against them. When engaging with the Safeguarding Officer, they might experience and express a range of emotions. They may be calm, anxious or concerned. Some may be willing to collaborate and share information freely; others may be more reticent to do so. Any communication and engagement with a respondent must take into account their wellbeing. The Safeguarding Officer should take the time to listen to the respondent and allow them to continue at their own pace. Safeguarding Officers should ask follow-up questions but should not ask questions that are intrusive into someone's personal life without explaining why that question / information might be relevant for the management of the case.

From other sources

Other sources which might provide Safeguarding Officers with relevant information include:

- reviewing any records provided by the complainant, the respondent and / or statutory services;
- searching and reviewing any records (e.g. archival information, clergy personnel records) to understand if any similar concerns or allegations were raised about the respondent in the past and, if applicable, how these were dealt with;
- talking to individuals who work or have worked closely with the respondent;
- talking to individuals who might have witnessed the events or behaviours raised as a concern or allegation, or other events or behaviours that can be used to draw conclusions about the respondent's behaviour.

When engaging with these individuals, similar principles of prioritising care and wellbeing should be followed. Any questions asked should be open and should not be biased or leading.

2.2 - Initial Contact: Support and well-being[4]

Support should be offered to a person raising an allegation, where that person is not the complainant and where witnessing or reporting the allegation has had an emotional, or otherwise detrimental, impact on them. Support may take the form of:

- reassuring the person they have done the right thing by reporting the allegation, explaining the next steps and what support might be offered to the complainant;
- signposting or referring the person to support and other relevant services (e.g. mental health helplines, GP); and / or
- if appropriate, suggesting that the person discusses with their line manager (or the person who oversees their activity in the Church) the possibility of taking some time off.

A trauma-informed approach must be embraced when establishing contact with the complainant and support must be offered in line with the requirements and guidance set out

[4] The requirements and guidance in this Code refer both to **safeguarding concerns** and to **safeguarding allegations**. However, for ease of reading, the term allegations is used throughout, and must be taken to include safeguarding concerns

in the Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse guidance. The different support options should be presented to the complainant in enough detail to enable to them to choose the options that best meets their needs.

Where the complainant is informed that the respondent will be notified, the Safeguarding Officer should consider and agree what support will be in place for the complainant at that point including the support options set out in *Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse* guidance

It is essential that the support, be it pastoral or therapeutic, to the complainant is not directly delivered by the Safeguarding Officer, as they will be leading on any safeguarding enquiries and will need to focus on the management of the process. The Safeguarding Officer can signpost the complainant and enable them to access support. Boundaries need to be made clear and no promises that cannot be kept should be made.

It is important to note that a complainant's needs may change over time, and therefore this must be reviewed on a regular basis.

The support that may need to be put in place for a complainant's immediate family / dependants should also be considered. This will depend on each family's needs, the circumstances of each case, and may change over time. These may include:

- helping the complainant and their family to identify support services in the community, and supporting them to engage with those services;
- extending the spiritual support provided by an ordained or lay person, to the complainant to include support to other members of their family;
- including members of the complainant's family in any apologies issued by the Church, should the complainant express this wish.

Children and young people

Where the complainant is a child or young person, contact should usually be made with their parents or carers first, and the parents or carers should be present during any conversation. Where statutory services need to be involved (i.e. there is a risk of significant harm), the Safeguarding Officer should take advice from the relevant services before engaging the parents or carers.

There are two exceptional circumstances in which the parents or carers may not be informed:

- If there are reasonable grounds to believe that informing the parents or carers would put the child or young person, or other family members at risk of significant harm. In these cases, statutory services (e.g. children's services, the police) should be informed and contact with the child or young person and their parents or carers should be established through them.

- Where it is unclear whether statutory services should be informed and the child or young person has expressed a wish for their parents to not be informed, their views should be taken seriously. The Safeguarding Officer should make a professional judgement, based on the child's age and understanding, whether the child's wishes should be followed. Depending on the situation, contact with the child or young person could be established through the person to whom they first made the disclosure, to ensure that a person that the child or young person trusts is present during the initial conversation.

Age-appropriate language should be used in any conversations involving children and young people to support their understanding of what is happening and enable them to engage. Further information can be found in the Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse guidance

Initial contact with the respondent

When planning the initial contact with the respondent, the Safeguarding Officer should consider the fact that the allegation might come as a surprise to the respondent and might trigger an emotional response. Respondents will react differently – some may feel anxious, angry, shocked or defensive and express those emotions openly, others may internalise those feelings and may appear as mechanically engaging with the process. As a result, the Safeguarding Officer should carefully consider the best way in which the information about the allegation should be raised. The Safeguarding Officer should consider if this information is best shared by a different Church Officer, for example an Archdeacon if the respondent is a member of clergy, and the respondent should be offered the opportunity to have someone with them for support. In all cases, regardless of the means used for the initial engagement, the Safeguarding Officer should follow up with an email or letter, setting out in writing the allegation that has been raised about the respondent and outlining the process that will be followed to assess and manage it.

Contacting other victims / survivors

During the course of the process, complainants may reference other potential victims and survivors. In most situations, it is not recommended that a Safeguarding Officer makes efforts to contact those individuals, unless specifically requested to do so by the police. Attempting to directly contact other victims and survivors can lead to re-traumatisation, particularly if the alleged abuse is non-recent.

Respondents who are under 18

When managing safeguarding concerns or allegations involving respondents who are under 18, Church Bodies should follow the requirements and guidance in this Code. However, the following considerations will need to be taken into account:

- There are legal restrictions on children of different ages engaging in employment and other activities, including volunteering. Church Bodies should ensure that they are compliant with the guidance on Child employment: Minimum ages children can work and on Volunteer opportunities, rights and expenses: When you can volunteer.

- The parents or carers of the child or young person will need to be involved in any processes carried out, and specialist support or an appropriate adult may need to be provided to them and the child or young person.

- The age of criminal responsibility in England and Wales is 10, and there are specific arrangements in law and practice for arresting, charging, prosecuting, sentencing and convicting children and young people for crimes. It is essential, in these cases, for the Safeguarding Officer to make the relevant referrals to work closely with and follow the advice of the relevant statutory authorities.

Support during interviews or meetings

Unless there is a risk of significant harm, the respondent must be provided with information about the nature of the allegation in writing prior to their meeting, to ensure that they are aware of the nature of the allegation and are given time to prepare.

Complainants and respondents can choose to be accompanied in meetings by a friend or individual who can provide support. For complainants, this can be one of the advocates provided by the Safe Spaces service (online meetings only), an advocate provided by the respective Church Body, or a different individual that they nominate for instance, a member of family or a friend. For respondents, this can be a Link Person or an individual that they nominate.

The person providing support in meetings should not be involved in the management of the allegation, either as a witness, or someone who is interviewed or may be required to give evidence in court proceedings.

Complainants and respondents have the right to seek legal advice and may designate a legal advisor, or a union representative, as the person who accompanies them in these meetings. The role of the person providing support in meetings is not to speak or advocate on behalf of the interviewee, and it is not to provide legal representation for the interviewee.

2.3 - 2.6 - Link Persons

This section and the associated requirements do not apply to deceased Church Officers

The Safeguarding Officer should check if the respondent has access to any form of support - for instance, some respondents may receive support from a spiritual director or may have access to counselling or an Employee Assistance Programme or similar. Respondents and their immediate families should also be signposted to, and supported to engage with, other support and relevant services in the community, depending on their needs.[5] It is possible that a respondent may choose to have their legal representative as their support and decline a Link Person. That is their choice and is allowable.

All respondents who are Church Officers must be offered the assistance of a Link Person. A Link Person provides support to a respondent by:

- listening to them;
- accompanying them in any meetings that are undertaken as part of the safeguarding process, to provide emotional support;
- assisting them to access information in relation to safeguarding processes;
- assisting them to keep updated on the progress of their case;

[5] The Clergy Support Trust provides a range of support services to Anglican members of clergy and their families and may constitute an avenue for accessing further support.

- considering the respondent's and their immediate family's support needs and wishes and sharing that information with the Safeguarding Officer;
- signposting the respondent to support services;
- maintaining clear records of the meetings and other communications with the respondent.

The Link Person could be someone from within the Church e.g. a senior or retired member of clergy or outside the Church. They should not be the Spiritual Director or confessor of the respondent.

Link Persons are not counsellors, spiritual guides, legal advisors or advocates for the respondent, and should not act in those roles. This should be made clear in training and any communications with Link Persons and respondents.

They must not have any involvement in safeguarding or other processes (e.g. statutory services investigations) linked to the allegation or have any involvement in the management of the case. They should not be a witness in court or tribunal proceedings.

The Link Person should have the appropriate skills and experience to deliver the responsibilities listed above. They should also have an understanding of Church structures or receive training that enables them to understand and navigate Church structures.

All Link Persons should complete the NST Link Person training, information on which can be found in the Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework. In exceptional circumstances, if a Church Body needs to deploy a Link Person at short notice and is struggling to identify or train a volunteer, they may contact the NST for advice and support.

Link Persons should receive appropriate support and supervision, through regular contact with the Safeguarding Officer, or through other appropriate arrangements. Safeguarding Officers or professionals suitably skilled should monitor the Link Persons' own wellbeing and pastoral needs, to ensure that any concerns or needs arising from them delivering the role are addressed.

A Link Person is not a confidant of a respondent. The Link Person should share a summary of the discussions with the Safeguarding Officer for adding to the case record. A Briefing Template is available to support a Link Person's first conversation with the respondent, to help them gather the information needed to provide consistent and appropriate support.

A Link Person should balance the need to maintain an accurate record of those meetings and communications with the need to support the respondent's wellbeing. Records of meetings do not need to contain the detail of what was discussed but should capture key points and actions.

The following should be shared with the Safeguarding Officer or appropriate authorities (e.g. the police) immediately:

- any information that the respondent or others are at risk of harm, including any risks of self-harm;
- any information that could be used by statutory services and criminal justice professionals to assist the prevention, detection or prosecution of a crime; and
- any information that the respondent has breached the requirements agreed, under this Code, as part of the interim or long-term arrangements for the management of risk e.g. the requirements of a Church Safety Plan.

Section 3: The role of Safeguarding Case Management Groups

This is a core pathway that applies only to living members of clergy, volunteers, and elected members. Employees will follow the HR processes of their organisation, which may have provision for a similar type of meeting. For the avoidance of doubt this should be read alongside:

- Pathway 4A: Members of Clergy
- Pathway 4B: Lay Volunteers
- Pathway 4G: Elected Members
- In addition, there may be circumstances where this should be read alongside Pathway 4F: Failure to follow safeguarding requirements and Pathway 4D: Posthumous Safeguarding Concerns. Please refer to those sections for more detail.

Section 1: Triage and Referrals
Section 2: Initial Contact

Section 3: Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG)

3.1 When should an SCMG be established?
3.2 - 3.4 Timescales for holding SCMG meetings
3.5 Identifying a Chair
3.6 The Membership of a SCMG
3.7 - 3.12 The Agenda of an SCMG Meeting
3.13, 3.14 Escalation to DSAP Chair or equivalent role
3.15 Reflective Practice exercises

Section 4: Pathways
Section 5: Risk Assessment
Section 6: Outcomes, Closure and Long-term risk management

Requirements:

3.1 A Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG) must be held in all safeguarding cases involving living Church Officers, with the exception of those being dealt with under Section 4E (Employees) and Section 4F (Failure to Follow). The purpose of an SCMG is to:

- Identify and manage risk
- Share ideas and discussion to ensure the correct processes are followed
- Consider what support needs to be offered to the complainant or the respondent, and if there are others who need safeguarding.
- Conduct a reflective exercise to consider the organisational or culture factors which impacted the case.

Timescales

3.2 The Safeguarding Officer must decide when to hold the initial SCMG meeting based on the urgency and individual circumstances of a case, provided that the initial meeting is held no later than ten working days after receiving the allegation. This may be delayed on agreement of the Safeguarding Officer and the Chair if there are good reasons to do so, and the Safeguarding Officer must record this decision and the rationale for it in the case notes.

3.3 The timing of subsequent SCMG meetings must be decided by the SCMG and be determined by the urgency and individual circumstances of a case.

3.4 If more than six weeks pass between two SCMG meetings, the Safeguarding Officer must record the reasons for this in the case notes and must ensure that SCMG members are kept up to date through regular written updates.

Chairing

3.5 The Safeguarding Officer must identify a Chair for the SCMG, ensuring that:

- there is no conflict of interest; and

- the Chair has the relevant skills and experience to effectively chair meetings on sensitive and complex issues.

Membership

3.6 The Safeguarding Officer, in consultation with the SCMG Chair, must decide the membership of the SCMG, ensuring that:

- there are no conflicts of interest;
- the Safeguarding Officer is always a member, unless a conflict of interest is identified. In these circumstances, a different member of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team or a Safeguarding Officer from a different diocese must be asked to contribute instead;
- legal advisors (e.g. Diocesan Registrar, Provincial Registrar) are not members of the SCMG and only attend in an advisory capacity, when legal advice is required;
- all members of a SCMG must be familiar with this Code of Practice, and have reviewed it in advance of the meeting;
- complainants, respondents and their representatives are not members of the SCMG.

Delivery

3.7 The Chair of the SCMG must ensure that each meeting has a clear agenda, and minutes are taken by someone with the necessary skills to make an accurate record. The record of the meeting must be approved by the SCMG Chair before distribution to members only.

3.8 The SCMG Chair must start each meeting by asking members to indicate if they have a conflict of interest and setting out expectations regarding confidentiality.

3.9 The SCMG Chair must ensure that a member of the SCMG has responsibility to keep the complainant and the respondent informed of SCMG decisions, recommendations and outcomes, and that a written update is sent to each one

of them, as a minimum every 6 weeks, unless an alternative format/timescale is requested by the complainant or respondent.

Decision-making

3.10 Decisions that relate to initial risk assessment and risk management must be made by the Safeguarding Officer, with the consultation and advice of the other SCMG members.

3.11 Decisions that relate to the implementation of support for the complainant, the respondent, their immediate families / dependants and the wider Church community, and decisions that relate to communications, must be made and agreed by the SCMG members as a group.

3.12 Where a decision is needed from the SCMG as a whole, this must be reached by a majority vote, and the decision recorded in writing by the Safeguarding Officer . In order for a decision to be agreed, the Safeguarding Officer must be part of the majority. Attendees who only attend in an advisory position cannot vote on SCMG decisions.

Escalation

3.13 If any SCMG member is of the view that the Group, or members in the Group, are acting in a way that does not manage risk effectively, this must be escalated to the DSAP Chair, the Chair of an equivalent body (e.g. Cathedral) , or where alternative local arrangements are already in place, these should be followed. For the NST, this must be escalated to the DSAP Chair (or a Cathedral equivalent) of another diocese with no interest or involvement in the case.

3.14 The Chair of the DSAP, or anyone in an equivalent role, must:

- review the information brought to them by the respective SCMG member and request any other relevant information from the Group, as needed;
- check that the procedures within this Code have been followed;
- check that any decisions made in an SCMG meeting were informed by evidence and were proportionate; and

- decide whether any actions or decisions need to be reconsidered by the SCMG and make recommendations on next steps.

3.15 At the end of the SCMG process, the Chair must ensure that a reflective exercise is undertaken in-line with the Safeguarding Practice Reviews Code of Practice.

Guidance

3.1 - When should a Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG) be established?

Safeguarding Case Management Groups (SCMGs) play a key role in the management of safeguarding concerns or allegations[6] involving Church Officers. Their main focus is the management of risk, but SCMGs need to not lose sight that at the centre of all their decisions is a complainant who has suffered harm, and therefore there are considerations about support for that individual as well as the safeguarding of others that need to be made. An SCMG should be convened in all cases involving Church Officers that are not employees. If the subject of the allegation is deceased, an SCMG may be called, if necessary, in line with section 4D. For employees, the relevant HR policies and procedures should be followed. Some HR policies and procedures may stipulate the formation of a panel which is to all intents and purposes an SCMG, and the functions and operation of that panel should be outlined in the HR policy / procedure. For the avoidance of doubt, where the matter relates to a member of the clergy who is also employed (whether employed by the Church of England or not), please see section 4A. The key in these situations is to ensure that the processes are as streamlined as possible and avoid unnecessary duplication.

With the exception of any external partners, such social services or police, each member of the SCMG will be a relevant person on the basis they will be a person who works in a diocese and whose work to any extent relates to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults (s5A(2)(n) Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016).

[6] The requirements and guidance in this Code refer both to **safeguarding concerns** and to **safeguarding allegations**. However, for ease of reading, the term allegations is used throughout, and must be taken to include safeguarding concerns

Functions of SCMGs and decision-making

The key function of the Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG) is to support the Safeguarding Officer in both diocese and cathedrals in the delivery of the following functions:

- to determine if there is sufficient information or evidence of risk to either the complainant or others, namely to children, young people and vulnerable adults, and manage any identified risks within the Church context;
- to consider the impact on the complainant, respondent and their immediate families or dependants, and to enable them to access appropriate support; and
- to consider the impact on the wider Church community and put in place appropriate measures to address any negative impacts and mitigate risks

The SCMG is not responsible for establishing the guilt of the respondent. Any evidence gathered through the SCMG procedure may be relied upon in later processes, including any disciplinary process and this must be made clear to both the complainant and respondent. An example of good practice is to include notice of this in the Chair's letter to them.

The complainant should be proactively offered a choice in how and how often, they receive updates, rather than needing to request an alternative themselves, and this should be kept under review with them as the case progresses.

Good safeguarding responses build on contextual information, bring together a variety of perspectives, allow for appropriate challenge and ensure coordinated approaches across all the relevant parties, departments and Church Bodies. They are about having the right discussions, with the right people, at the right time.

By bringing together an SCMG to support the Safeguarding Officer in the management of an allegation, Church Bodies ensure that:

- different professionals are able to share their perspectives and bring together different pieces of information, in order to reach comprehensive and nuanced conclusions;
- responses to allegations are coordinated, ensuring that actions sit at the right level and are delivered by the right professionals, rather than being seen as the responsibility of the Safeguarding Officer or the Safeguarding Team alone; and
- a structure for checks-and-balances exists and different proposals for how to respond are effectively challenged, providing an added layer of safeguards against individual biases.

The SCMG has both decision-making and consultative functions, in that some decisions will need to be made by the SCMG, whilst others will sit with the Safeguarding Officer alone or outside of the Group. The latter will require SCMG members to make recommendations to, or engage with, professionals outside of the Group members.

The decisions that will be required from the Safeguarding Officer will be those linked to recommending risk assessments and risk management, which are set out in the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer Regulations 2024 and the Safeguarding (Clergy Risk Assessment) Regulations 2025 including:

- whether and what referrals to statutory services may be needed;
- whether and what short-term mitigations of risk may be put in place following an allegation being raised, for example suspension or interim Church Safety Plan;
- what safeguarding enquiries may need to be undertaken;
- whether those enquiries led to risk being substantiated or unsubstantiated, and whether and what risks were identified as a result;
- whether a risk assessment is required and whether it should be independent;
- whether any relevant disciplinary procedures should be triggered, and at which point;
- how any identified risks should be managed in the long-term.

However, when reaching these decisions, the Safeguarding Officer should utilise the SCMG as a forum for testing the strength of the rationale and underpinning evidence for any decision reached, allowing the members to challenge any aspect of it and taking on board their advice. In practice, although decisions in these areas will most commonly sit with a Safeguarding Officer, the Safeguarding Officer should seek to reach consensus as far as possible, amongst all other SCMG members before proceeding. Any dissenting views or opinions should be recorded in the case notes.

The SCMG as a group will need to make decisions in those areas linked to communications and the support that is put in place for the complainant, the respondent, their immediate families / dependants, and the wider Church community. This will ensure a coordinated Church response to the allegation.

It is also important that it is clear at the start of the SCMG process which decisions require escalation to other boards or professionals. Ensuring that those escalation routes are clear from the start can avoid confusion and delays further along in the process. Similarly, whilst the Safeguarding Officer may reach decisions on whether suspension and/or disciplinary proceedings are needed in certain cases, some of these decisions will need to be raised as

recommendations to the relevant person or body. For example, the Safeguarding Officer would need to make a recommendation to the bishop for a respondent who is a member of clergy to be suspended. Such areas are often role-specific and are mapped in the Section 4 Pathways of this Code.

3.2 - 3.4 - Timescales for holding SCMG meetings

The timing for the initial SCMG meeting may be affected by other processes, such as police investigations or social services assessments, which will always take primacy, although sometimes these processes can run in parallel. If relevant information is likely to become available shortly, or there are other reasons for a short delay in order to make the initial SCMG meeting more effective, this is acceptable and the reasons for a delay should be recorded in the case notes.

The expectation is that most initial SCMG meetings would be held within ten working days from the Safeguarding Officer receiving the allegation. In high-risk situations, including where there is a need to immediately consider a decision to suspend the respondent, they may need to take place within two working days.

Subsequent SCMG meetings need to be held at points that are productive and meaningful for the case, whilst also ensuring that the case is progressed in a timely manner. Generally, no more than six weeks should pass between SCMG meetings, however, there is recognition that each case will be different and there may be circumstances in which an SCMG will need to meet less often, for example if a police investigation is underway.

Where more than six weeks pass between SCMG meetings, the Safeguarding Officer should record the reasons for this in the case notes and should ensure that SCMG members remain engaged and up to date with developments regarding the case. If SCMG members become disengaged and unsure of developments, this can lead to lack of consistency and focus. This is why communication is key, and the Safeguarding Officer is required to provide regular written updates to the SCMG members. How “regular” these updates are is a decision for the Safeguarding Officer, however it may be beneficial to follow the six-week cycle, as this aligns with Requirement 3.9 to keep complainants and respondents informed (unless they have requested alternative arrangements). In certain instances, these updates may need to simply include an acknowledgement that the circumstances of a case have not changed in the previous six weeks.

3.5 - Identifying a Chair

The key skills that a Safeguarding Officer should consider when identifying a Chair for an SCMG include the ability to:

- engage with the complexities of managing a safeguarding allegation;
- maintain an unbiased view whilst the allegation is being assessed / managed;
- chair meetings on sensitive topics, being able to keep the group focused on the agenda and ensuring that all members engage constructively;
- provide an assurance / checks-and-balances function that leads the group to making evidence-based decisions;
- understand group dynamics and anxieties that can lead to group think and other biased decision-making.

When identifying a Chair, the Safeguarding Officer may seek to engage individuals who have experience in managing safeguarding processes or those who are experienced in managing complaints, discipline and / or capability matters. The role of an SCMG Chair may be fulfilled by an Archdeacon, or a Chapter member with responsibility for safeguarding, but should not be an individual who has direct responsibility for disciplinary processes or line management of the respondent.

Having the same individuals chair all SCMGs in an area can have positive implications, in terms of those individuals developing their skills and knowledge in how to manage SCMG meetings and ensuring consistency. However, this should not be the default assumption, and Safeguarding Officer should make a conscious decision in each case about the person who would best meet the criteria above. The Safeguarding Officer's decision should also include a consideration of any conflicts of interest.

As a general rule, the Safeguarding Officer should not chair the SCMG, as this could potentially compromise the SCMG's ability to effectively scrutinise the information provided. Where there are a team of Safeguarding Officers headed by a manager who does not undertake case work, this is more workable. Generally, however, Safeguarding Officers may chair SCMG meetings only in exceptional circumstances, for brief periods of time, when no other resource is available locally. This should be accompanied by efforts from Church Bodies to identify a suitable alternative resource.

Where the allegation is about the DSO, or a member of their team, there is a clear need for the Regional Safeguarding Lead and/or another DSO to be involved from the outset.

Diocesan Bishops and Archbishops must not chair or be members of SCMGs in order to not compromise potential decisions about disciplinary matters which rest with them. Similarly, independent members of Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panels (DSAPs) should not chair or be part of an SCMG, as this would conflict with their role in the quality assurance of safeguarding practice.

In exceptional circumstances – for instance, in complex cases involving allegations from multiple victims regarding the same respondent or the same group of respondents, where the NST is not leading on that case - Safeguarding Officers may consider appointing a Chair that is independent from the Church. In such cases, appropriate information and training to ensure an understanding of Church structures should be put in place. A series of induction videos to support Church Bodies with this task is available on the Safeguarding Training Portal, and can be accessed by any SCMG Chair or any other SCMG member. Church Bodies should ensure that all SCMG members access and complete the induction materials in advance of attendance where possible. An alternative option here may be to request the support of a Safeguarding Officer from a different diocese or the support of a Safeguarding Regional Lead, who would provide a degree of independence, and also be familiar with Church structures.

3.6 - The membership of a SCMG

Ensuring consistency in the membership of an SCMG has been previously identified as a key enabler for evidence-based, unbiased and informed decisions. It is important, therefore, to differentiate between the members of an SCMG, and those attendees who will join a limited number of meetings in order to advise on specific aspects e.g. legal advisors.

SCMG members should be made aware of the commitment that joining an SCMG involves and the expectations regarding attendance and participation. Where there are absences due to annual leave or other reasons, consideration must be given as to whether appropriate cover should be put in place. Where members of staff or members of the SCMG leave, consideration should be given to how the transition can be made as seamless as possible for the complainant and the respondent. Where responsibility for a case transfers to another Safeguarding Officer or safeguarding team, the requirements in Section 1 relating to handover apply.

The Safeguarding Officer and the SCMG Chair should exercise caution when deciding the membership of an SCMG in situations where individuals hold dual roles. Conflicts of interest need to be considered from the start and members should be clearly told in which role they are invited to attend.

Because the SCMG is not a court seeking to establish guilt or innocence, but rather a vehicle to identify and manage risk, complainants, respondents and their representatives and supporters are not members of the SCMG and do not attend SCMG meetings. However, it is crucial that their views, and any information they consider relevant to the identification and management of risk, are provided to the Group.

Although the complainant does not attend SCMG meetings, consideration should be given to introducing them to the members managing their case where appropriate. See the *Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse* guidance for more on trauma informed approaches.

Membership for cases managed locally

In dioceses, depending on the circumstances of each case, the membership of an SCMG may include:

- Statutory services, where those services are able and willing to resource this;
- Diocesan officers:
    - the Safeguarding Officer;
    - an archdeacon, or other representative of the bishop;
    - other relevant diocesan senior staff;
    - in an advisory position, the Diocesan Director for Communications or a deputy;
    - in an advisory position, the Diocesan Registrar or a deputy.
- Parish officers:
    - the incumbent, if relevant to the case;
    - the Churchwarden(s);
    - the Parish Safeguarding Officer;
    - other relevant parties, by agreement.
- Religious Communities:
    - In addition, the DSP or Leader should be involved as appropriate.

Generally, Diocesan Secretaries will not be part of an SCMG but will be kept informed about key developments.

In cathedrals, the membership of an SCMG may include:

- the CSO and / or DSO;
- a residentiary Canon, acting for the Dean;
- the Cathedral Safeguarding Lead / the Canon who takes lead on safeguarding;
- other relevant senior Cathedral staff,

- in an advisory position, the Cathedral Communications Officer, or equivalent;
- in an advisory position, a legal advisor.

Generally, Deans and Cathedral Chief Operating Officers will not be part of an SCMG but will be kept informed about key developments.

Membership for cases managed at the national level

- National officers:
    - the NST: Director / Deputy Director for Casework / Casework Manager / members of the Casework Team;
    - a senior representative from the relevant archbishop's office;
    - any other relevant national senior staff;
    - in an advisory position, representation from the National Communications Team and the Archbishop's Communications Officer;
    - in an advisory position, Legal Officers or their deputies.
- Diocesan / Cathedral officers[7]
    - Safeguarding Officers
    - representatives of the Diocesan Bishops / Cathedral Deans;
    - in an advisory capacity, Diocesan / Cathedral Directors of Communication or Communications Officers;
    - other relevant parties, by agreement.

3.7 - 3.12 - The agenda of an SCMG meeting

The following elements are recommended as core items on a typical agenda for an SCMG meeting. A minutes template is provided in the SCMG Resource Pack (Resource 3) and should be used for every SCMG meeting. The agenda, the approved minutes and any papers circulated before or during the meeting should be saved together in a folder for that meeting on the case management system:

- Conflict of interest declarations;
- Confidentiality statement;

[7] from both the diocese or cathedral in which the alleged abuse took place and where this is required, from the diocese or cathedral in which the respondent now lives/or works:

- Statement that the group keep complainants at the heart of the discussion;
- Assessment and management of risk, including:
    - Consideration of any statutory processes, including referrals to the LADO and DBS and SSIRs.
    - Consideration of any disciplinary processes, including CDM;
    - Whether the respondent attends or seeks to attend more than one Church setting, and what enquiries have been made to establish this.
- Support for the complainant and their immediate family / dependants;
- Support for the respondent and their immediate family / dependants;
- Impact on the parish or the wider Church community;
- Communications;
- Consideration of threshold for Serious Safeguarding Incident reporting; referral to DBS;
- Overview to confirm decisions and next steps, including the timing of the next meeting and any support that SCMG members may require to meet their responsibilities within the Group.
- Suspension and disciplinary steps

For the avoidance of doubt, the DSO has ultimate responsibility for making any recommendations to the bishop with regards to suspension of a member of clergy, however it is good practice to seek the views of the SCMG in this respect. If any member of the SCMG does not agree with the DSO's decision, they should follow the escalation process set out below.

Where referrals have been made to statutory services, a review of statutory engagement is expected in which a decision around escalation may take place. Where a statutory body has not responded, or where the response has been inadequate, the SCMG should discuss whether to hold or escalate, in line with the Escalation Framework. This sits alongside the Safeguarding Officer's ongoing duty to review and escalate outside of scheduled SCMG meetings, set out in section 1.1.10.

3.13 - 3.14 - Escalation to DSAP Chair or equivalent role

It is important that any individual member of an SCMG who has concerns about the Group's ability to manage risk effectively has an avenue to raise these. Differences of opinion are

inevitable, but members should not feel that they have no recourse when faced with making a decision they are uncomfortable with. Generally, disputes arising at the SCMG will be referred to the DSAP Chair (or the Cathedral equivalent), however in certain circumstances, a Church Body may commission an Independent Safeguarding Consultant on a one-off or residual basis to handle escalations or disputes. When a matter is escalated to the DSAP Chair, or whoever is performing the equivalent role, they will not reverse any decisions made by the SCMG, the Safeguarding Officer, or any actions undertaken by them. However, they will make a set of recommendations to the SCMG, which may include a recommendation to revisit a decision and / or gather further information. Should the SCMG decide not to act on the advice of the DSAP chair, the reasons for doing so must be given in writing to the RSL.

For the NST, escalation will be to a DSAP Chair (or Cathedral equivalent) from another diocese that has no interest or involvement in the case.

As the SCMG is a forum for assessing and managing risk, complainants, respondents and their representatives cannot appeal decisions made by the SCMG. However, if they are of the view that the requirements outlined in this Code are not appropriately met and want to challenge this, they can follow the complaints procedure in the relevant Church Body.

3.15 - Reflective Practice Exercises

As set out in the Safeguarding Practice Review Code of Practice, it is a requirement that every SCMG conducts a form of reflective exercise after the case has reached a conclusion. In some cases, this may be a very short exercise. In others, it may require the commissioning of a formal Safeguarding Practice Review. Further information on when to commission a formal Review, and the types of exercises that can be undertaken can be found in the Code.

Section 4A: Members of Clergy

*This Pathway contains **additional** and specific Requirements and guidance for dealing with allegations against members of the clergy.*

Section 1: Triage and Referrals

Section 2: Initial Contact

Section 3: Safeguarding Case Management Group

Section 4A: Managing safeguarding allegations against members of clergy

- 4A.1: Initial Response Considerations
- 4A.2: The initial case summary and the role of the SCMG
- 4A.3: Immediate assessment of safeguarding risks
- 4A.4: Support
- 4A.5: Impact on Church Community
- 4A.6: Disciplinary Procedures
- 4A.7 - 4A.11: The aims and scope of safeguarding enquiries

Section 5: Risk Assessment

Section 6: Outcomes, Closure and Long-term risk management

Introduction and definitions

This section sets out the requirements and guidance to be followed in response to safeguarding concerns and allegations where:

- it covers recent or non-recent allegations of abuse;
- the respondent is alive; and
- the respondent is a member of clergy

As outlined in Section 4F of this Code, concerns of failure to meet safeguarding requirements may be managed under this pathway, but only in cases in which the circumstances set out in that section determine this is the most appropriate pathway. A separate pathway for the management of posthumous safeguarding allegations is included in Section 4D.

Who is a member of the clergy?

For the purposes of this section, a member of clergy is any person in Holy Orders (i.e. any person who has been ordained), whether or not they hold office, including those who hold Permission to Officiate (PTO) or Overseas Permission to Officiate (OPTO). All clergy remain subject to the safeguarding processes and standards of conduct set out in this Code, regardless of age or frailty.

The National Register of Clergy

The National Register of Clergy is a publicly available list of all clergy in the Church of England who are authorised to minister. Further information on the register is contained in Appendix 2.

Standards of conduct for clergy

By virtue of their ordination and office clergy are held to a high standard of personal and professional conduct. Further information and advice are contained in Appendix 3.

Ordinands

This pathway does not apply to ordinands. Where a safeguarding allegation is raised about an ordinand, please see Section 4B (Managing safeguarding concerns or allegations: Lay Volunteers). Where the allegation relates to events that took place while the respondent was

an ordinand, but they have since been ordained, this pathway applies. See 'Determining the applicable pathway' in the introduction. However, as ordinands will often undertake placements in parishes and as they prepare for life in ministry, they are expected to meet high standards of conduct. Ordinands normally attend a Theological Education Institutions (TEIs), and this is generally on the recommendation of a sponsoring bishop and diocese, therefore both the TEI and the bishop need to have processes in place for:

- Risk assessments resulting from blemished DBS checks – this will normally be dealt with by the DSO from the sponsoring dioceses
- Responding to concerns or allegations arising during their period of ordination – this will normally be dealt with by the TEI, but the sponsoring diocese will need to be made aware in case the bishop has cause to withdraw their sponsorship. Depending on the nature of the incident, the DSO in the area where the incident took place must also be made aware, for example, if there are victims or survivors who need support.

For the avoidance of doubt, TEIs are independent bodies and do not meet the criteria of being relevant persons, church officers or church bodies. As TEIs are higher education institutions, they are required to have their own safeguarding policies and processes in place and are subject to their own inspection regimes.

Structure

This section is structured into a series of steps that need to be followed when managing safeguarding allegations involving members of clergy. Some steps and requirements may need to be followed in a different order to that presented in this Section, to reflect the specific circumstances of each case.

Initial response

Requirements:

4A.1 When managing a safeguarding allegation about a member of clergy, the Safeguarding Officer must convene an SCMG on behalf of the diocese, by following the requirements in Section 3.

Guidance

4A.1 - Initial response considerations

The "Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy" specify that:

"There is no separation between the public and home life of the clergy: at all times and in all places they should manifest the highest standards of personal conduct."

Where the allegation refers to matters in a member of clergy's personal life, Safeguarding Officers should exercise their professional judgement and decide whether to act on that information. This involves considering whether referrals need to be made to the relevant statutory services and assessing whether the information received presents a risk that has any bearing on the member of clergy's ministry, particularly any work with children, young people or vulnerable adults. Advice on the level of transferrable risk in such cases may also be sought from statutory authorities. Where the Safeguarding Officer decides to initiate the relevant safeguarding processes, a clear rationale must be recorded in the case notes which details which aspects of the information received are relevant for safeguarding purposes, how and why they are relevant.

When managing such cases, the Safeguarding Officer should work closely with any statutory services involved and take their advice. The Safeguarding Officer's assessment of the case should be proportionate and should not lead to an unnecessary and intrusive collection of information about someone's personal life. There should be a clear rationale for each question and action, linking back to an aspect of the respondent's work within the Church.

The above advice also applies to situations in which an allegation is made about someone in a member of clergy's immediate family. Generally, these situations will not trigger a safeguarding process under this Code, unless there is a rationale to justify that a member of clergy has displayed concerning behaviours in how they dealt with that matter, for example where they actively covered up abuse inflicted by a member of their family, or where they appear to believe that abuse inflicted by a member of their family is acceptable. This does not apply to situations in which the family member is directly involved in the life the Church, as an employee, volunteer or otherwise, in which case they are a Church Officer, and the relevant section of this Code will apply to them.

Where it is known that the subject of a safeguarding allegation has themselves experienced abuse, Safeguarding Officers should recognise that the respondent's role as a respondent

and their experience as a victim or survivor must be treated as distinct. This should be handled sensitively. The safeguarding allegation must still be assessed and managed in accordance with this Code; a respondent's experience of abuse does not exempt them from safeguarding processes.

The investigation concerns the respondent's conduct as a Church Officer and must not be used as a basis for scrutinising their personal experience of abuse. Where a respondent's experience of abuse is or becomes known in the course of the investigation, this information may be relevant to understanding the context of their conduct but must be handled in accordance with the *Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse* guidance.

The respondent's entitlement to support under that guidance runs in parallel with safeguarding processes and is not contingent on the outcome of the allegation. Where appropriate, Safeguarding Officers should ensure the respondent is made aware of the support available to them.

Position of Trust/Person in a Position of Trust

'Position of trust' is a legal term defined in the Sexual Offences Act 2003. It is explained as an adult "caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge" of a child under the age of 18. The Act defines settings in which adults would have a position of trust e.g. hospital or an educational institution, examples of such roles would include Teachers, Care Workers, Youth Justice Workers, Social Workers and Doctors. The Act was updated in 2022 to include sports coaches and faith leadership

It is against the law for someone in a 'Position of trust' to engage in sexual activity with a child in their care, even if that child is over the age of consent. This means that even though the child may be 16 or over, it is still illegal to engage in sexual activity with them if you hold a 'Position of trust'. This includes young people up until the age of 18.

This is not to be confused with the Care Act 2014 definition of a Person in a Position of Trust (PIPOT), which is anyone who works or volunteers with adults with care and support needs. People can be considered to be in a 'position of trust' where they are likely to have contact with adults with care and support needs as part of their employment or voluntary work, and:

- Where the role carries an expectation of Trust and
- The person is in a position to exercise authority, power, or control over an adult(s) with care and support needs (as perceived by the adult).

If a safeguarding allegation is made against a Church Officer who is in such a position, then Adult Social Care and, where there is also a perceived risk to children, Children's Social Care, must be informed immediately. This includes situations where there is a perceived risk to the respondent's own family or household, including partners/ex-partners, other family members and any children in their care.

Employment or volunteering

A member of clergy is a trusted individual who, by the nature of their work, will come into contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Because of this, higher standards of conduct are expected from members of clergy than might be expected from other persons. As a result, if information about an allegation involving a member of clergy becomes available that relates to their conduct in a secular role the processes set out in this Code should still be followed - even if the allegation has already been investigated / assessed as part of the respondent's other role. The reasons for following these dual processes are:

- the need to consider the implications for the member of clergy's continued ministry within the Church, including any risks to children, young people and vulnerable adults, how these will be managed under the Clergy Risk assessment Regulations; and
- the need to consider any allegation against the Church's own conduct standards which, in some cases, may be higher than the standards of other external bodies / employers, and is relevant if a CDM is being considered.

The above is particularly relevant for:

- chaplains, who may also be subject to disciplinary processes linked to their role as an employee, for example in a prison or hospital;
- members of clergy employed in a TEI or elsewhere, who may also be subject to the TEI's or a different employer's own disciplinary processes; and
- members of clergy who hold PTO or a licence, but are also employed elsewhere, who may be subject to an employer's own disciplinary processes.

Where the member of clergy is employed by a church body, for example in a diocesan or national role, consideration first needs to be given as to whether the allegation has arisen in their role as an "employee" or as an ordained member of clergy. If it is in relation to their employed role, then Section 4E - employment pathway must be followed in the first instance. This is because employees have certain rights under employment law as to how discipline

and misconduct is dealt with. However, at every stage of the process, consideration must be given as to whether and when processes such as CDM and risk assessment should commence, which will by default require the involvement of the DSO.
The Church Body receiving information about an allegation in a second role should seek to understand: the nature of the allegation, the nature and outcomes of any processes already undertaken, and whether a risk assessment regarding the respondent has already been undertaken and can be shared.

If a Church Body is managing an allegation regarding a member of clergy and has information that they hold a second role elsewhere, the Church Body will need to consider if that information needs to be shared with the second body. This will generally be done via the police, LADO, or other relevant statutory authority. The key questions that should be asked in these cases are:

- Are statutory services involved? Have they been informed? If yes, follow their advice.
- Does the individual's second role involve work with children, young people and vulnerable adults?
- What is the nature of the allegation? Based on the records and information gathered, if the allegation is substantiated, is there a continued risk of harm to children, young people or vulnerable adults?
- Would children, young people or vulnerable adults potentially be at risk if information is not shared?
- Have the Diocesan Registrar or relevant legal advisor and the relevant Data Protection Officer provided advice whether the information about the allegation should be shared? If not, seek their advice.

Any information shared needs to be necessary, accurate and proportionate, with a clear rationale and aim, and should meet data protection obligations. Please note that the Internal Information Sharing Plan covers information sharing within the Church of England and with the Church in Wales but does not cover information sharing with other religious organisations or Christian denominations. Information sharing with other religious organisations is permitted as necessary to manage risks to children, young people and vulnerable adults, but must be carried out with care and close attention to the data protection principles.

Responding to allegations involving non-recent events where the respondent has left the Church Body

For guidance on managing safeguarding allegations involving respondents who are now deceased, please refer to Section 4D within this Code.

Complainants who come forward to disclose non-recent abuse will have varied reasons for doing so: it might have taken them a long time to look at the events that they have experienced and see them as abuse, they might have felt afraid to disclose whilst the respondent was still in active ministry, they may express a need or desire to achieve closure on past traumatic experiences, and / or they may wish to prevent others from becoming victims of abuse.

Regardless of when the events disclosed are alleged to have taken place, complainants should be taken seriously, and their disclosures should not be ignored. A trauma-informed approach should be applied, and support must be offered in line with the "Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse" guidance. Specific care should be given to the fact that the complainant might feel a sense of disappointment and / or frustration in situations in which limited action can be undertaken regarding the respondent, e.g. when a disciplinary process cannot be followed. Being open and clear about what processes can and cannot be followed from the start will help manage the complainant's expectations.

Assessing and managing any ongoing risk

Where an allegation refers to non-recent events and the respondent is alive, a Safeguarding Officer may be faced with different scenarios, including if the member of clergy:

a) continues to be in active ministry in the Church of England, but has moved to a different diocese or Church Body;
b) is retired;
c) has been removed from their clerical role as a result of disciplinary procedures;
d) has left the Church of England entirely and moved to a role in a different denomination or a role outside of the Church.

A respondent's age, frailty or level of ministry, or the fact that they are no longer in active ministry or live overseas, is not in itself a reason to take no action or to conclude that there is no ongoing risk. The Safeguarding Officer should still assess what action is proportionate, and record the decision and the rationale in the case notes. Where a respondent lacks the capacity to engage with the process, see Withdrawal of PTO and OPTO.

If a member of clergy has left the Church Body but continues to be in active ministry in a different diocese or Church Body, then the Safeguarding Officer should seek to identify the diocese or Church Body in which the respondent currently exercises their ministry. The Safeguarding Officer should then share the allegation with the Safeguarding Officer in that diocese (in line with the Internal Information Sharing Plan) and agree how the allegation will be taken forward and by whom. The requirements, advice and procedures set out in this Code would then apply. This also applies to situations where a member of clergy has retired, but continues to have a role in the Church, e.g. if they have PTO.

If information is held or becomes available about a respondent's current role, then the need to share information about the allegation with the new employer or the new religious organisation should be considered. This will generally be done only in very limited circumstances where the statutory threshold is met, usually via the police, LADO or other relevant statutory authority. The key questions that should be asked in these cases are:

- Are statutory services involved? Have they been informed? If yes, follow their advice.
- Does the individual's new role involve work with children, young people and vulnerable adults?
- What is the nature of the allegation? Based on the records and information gathered, if the allegation is substantiated, is there a continued risk of harm to children, young people and vulnerable adults?
- Would children, young people and vulnerable adults potentially be at risk if information is not shared?
- Have the Diocesan Registrar or relevant legal advisor and the relevant Data Protection Officer provided advice whether the information about the allegation should be shared? If not, seek their advice.

Any information shared needs to be necessary, accurate and proportionate, with a clear rationale and aim, and should meet the requirements under data protection legislation. The Internal Information Sharing Plan covers information sharing with the Church in Wales, for other organisations or denominations, the information should be shared in line with the data protection principles as set out above.

Safeguarding enquiries and processes

Requirements:

The role of the SCMG

4A.2 Ahead of the initial SCMG meeting, the Safeguarding Officer must prepare an initial case summary.

4A.3 The Safeguarding Officer must assess any immediate safeguarding risks and decide if any mitigations need to be put in place in the short-term, i.e. interim Church Safety Plan, recommendations for suspension, voluntarily withdrawing from ministry, PTO / OPTO withdrawal.

4A.4 The SCMG must consider the support that is, or should be, provided to the complainant, the respondent and their immediate families or dependants.

4A.5 The SCMG must consider the impact of the allegation, and any actions taken in response, on the wider Church community and put in place appropriate measures to address any negative impacts and mitigate risks.

4A.6 The Safeguarding Officer must decide if the relevant disciplinary processes, including CDM, should be initiated.

Safeguarding enquiries

4A.7 The Safeguarding Officer must decide the scope of any subsequent safeguarding enquiries.

4A.8 Respondents must have the option to be accompanied by a companion, who can provide emotional support, in any interviews or meetings.

4A.9 The Safeguarding Officer must compile the information gathered through any subsequent enquiries in a report, which must be presented to the SCMG.

4A.10 The aims of any safeguarding enquiries are to:

- gather relevant information and establish facts; and
- identify any ongoing safeguarding risks.

4A.11 If interviews are carried out, the Safeguarding Officer must make a written record of each interview, share it with the relevant interviewee to confirm its accuracy, and save it in the case files.

4A.12 Based on the information gathered, the Safeguarding Officer, in consultation with the SCMG, must determine if, on the balance of probabilities there is sufficient evidence to substantiate the existence of an ongoing safeguarding risk. Where the determination is that there is not sufficient evidence, the matter is unsubstantiated.

4A.13 If the outcome is 'substantiated', the SCMG must follow the requirements in Section 5 (Risk Assessment).

4A.14 If the outcome is 'unsubstantiated', the case must be closed at this stage and the SCMG must follow the requirements for closure in section 6 (Outcomes, closure and the long-term management of risk).

Guidance

4A.2 - The initial case summary and the role of the SCMG

This section should be read alongside Section 3. The SCMG is a consultative body for the Safeguarding Officer, and therefore there must be discussion between the SCMG and Safeguarding Officer.

Ahead of the initial meeting of the SCMG, the Safeguarding Officer should prepare an initial case summary, which outlines the information known at that stage and any processes already initiated or that need SCMG consideration. The purpose of the initial case summary is to provide the SCMG with the background information needed in order to advise and make decisions on next steps in the management of a case. Generally, an initial case summary will include the following (as far as they can be ascertained at this stage):

- details of the initial allegation, including a summary of any information provided by the complainant and the respondent and any relevant information from existing records (e.g. past recorded safeguarding concerns);
- input and plans from statutory services, or the rationale for not making a referral to statutory services;
- a dynamic assessment of risk, based on information known at that stage, and any proposed mitigations in the short-term i.e. Interim Church Safety Plan, recommendations for voluntary step down from duties, suspension, PTO / OPTO withdrawal;
- a recommendation whether an allegation of misconduct should be brought under the relevant clergy discipline procedure or steps should be taken under the capability procedure;
- a recommendation as to whether a CDM should be taken, or the respondent should be suspended;
- consideration of other referrals that have been, or may need to be made, in line with the requirements in section 1 above;
- details of any gaps in information that impede the effective assessment of the allegation and any safeguarding risks, as well as plans for how this information may be gathered, including Key Lines of Enquiry, and who will need to be spoken to;
- details of the support put in place for the complainant, the respondent and their immediate families / dependants, and any proposals for additional support that may be needed;
- if appropriate, proposals for the communications and support that may be needed for the Church community impacted by the concern / allegation and any actions taken in response.

The focus of each SCMG meeting will differ with the ongoing management of the case. Decisions made during SCMG meetings should be regularly reviewed in light of new information becoming available, to ensure that they remain timely and relevant.

For the avoidance of doubt, the DSO has ultimate responsibility for making any recommendations to the bishop with regards to suspension of a member of clergy, however it is good practice to seek the views of the SCMG in this respect. If any member of the SCMG does not agree with the DSO's decision, they should follow the escalation process set out in Section 3.

4A.3 - Immediate assessment of safeguarding risks

Interim Church Safety Plans

An Interim Church Safety Plan is focused on the short-term management of risk whilst safeguarding and other processes are ongoing. An Interim Church Safety Plan is not based on a formal or complete risk assessment, but a dynamic consideration of risk by the Safeguarding Officer, as relevant information is being gathered. Interim Church Safety Plans follow the same requirements as regular Church Safety Plans.

Interim Church Safety Plans need to be agreed and signed by the respondent. Any refusal to sign the Plan should be considered by the SCMG. In such cases, alternative ways to manage risk need to be identified.

Voluntarily withdrawing from ministry

In certain circumstances (for instance, where it is unclear if the requirements for suspension have been met), members of clergy may be asked to voluntarily withdraw from ministry whilst safeguarding enquiries and risk assessments are carried out, or whilst disciplinary procedures are underway. This request will come from the bishop in writing following the advice of Safeguarding Officer and the SCMG. This request must clearly set out the parameters of what withdrawing from ministry entails for the respondent. It is unlikely that this will ever be an appropriate course of action to take where there is a safeguarding risk. There may be exceptions, for example where there is a procedural breach under Pathway 4F in extenuating circumstances, but not when there has been an allegation of direct abuse, and an appropriate determination of risk has been made.

Voluntarily withdrawing from ministry is not the same as a respondent being suspended, but needs to be accompanied by similar considerations in relation to the support that should be put in place for the respondent during that time and in relation to support for the parish or Church Body in which they exercise their ministry. For the avoidance of doubt, anyone voluntarily withdrawing from ministry must be removed from the National Register of Clergy.

Suspension

The decision to suspend is a neutral act in that there has as yet been no determination of fact and aims to ensure that cases can be assessed in a dispassionate manner and to protect all parties involved for instance, by ensuring no further accusations are made against the respondent. There must always be reasonable and proper cause to suspend someone.

Under section 36 of the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003, a bishop can suspend a priest or deacon from their role in the following circumstances:

- a CDM complaint has been brought against them;
- they have been arrested, either in England or elsewhere, on suspicion of having committed a criminal offence;
- they have been convicted of an offence, other than a summary offence;
- they are included on a barred list; or
- the bishop is "satisfied, on the basis of information provided by a local authority or the police" that they present "a significant risk of harm" towards a child or vulnerable adult.

Further information about suspensions, including information about the revocation of a suspension and the right of a respondent to appeal a suspension decision, can be found in sections 36 and 37 of the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 and in the accompanying Code of Practice.

Withdrawal of PTO and OPTO

A PTO is held entirely at the bishop's discretion and may be withdrawn by the bishop at any time, without any right of appeal. The bishop can decide to withdraw a PTO whilst the relevant safeguarding processes are underway. Where a member of clergy, for example because of age or frailty, lacks the capacity to meaningfully engage with the safeguarding process set out in this Code, this should be considered when determining whether they continue to hold PTO or an active ministry role. Further guidance is available in the House of Bishops' "Policy on Granting Permission to Officiate".

For members of clergy who hold OPTO, the circumstances under which it can be temporarily withdrawn are outlined under the Overseas and Other Clergy (Ministry and Ordination) Measure 1967. Further guidance is available in the House of Bishops' "Policy on Granting Permission to Officiate".

4A.4 - Support

Support to victims and survivors of church-related abuse must be provided in line with the requirements in the Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse guidance.

The opportunity for a senior member of clergy to meet with concerned members of the Church can provide an important outlet for those persons to express any concerns or feelings. Assistance in managing those feelings, worries, anxiety and any crisis in faith should be provided. Some parishioners may want to pray together, and consideration should be given to how this can be facilitated.

Stress may also be experienced by other members of clergy or parish staff/volunteers, who may have an increased workload as a result, as well as trying to support parishioners and coming to terms with their own feelings on the situation. Arrangements for what support may be appropriate to put in place for those individuals should be considered by the Archdeacon or Area Dean and may include the availability of a senior member of clergy or support from a priest / vicar from a neighbouring parish.

4A.5 - Impact on Church Community

When a member of clergy is suspended, voluntarily steps down from duties or has their PTO withdrawn because of a safeguarding allegation, this can have a significant impact on:

- members of the Church community;
- other members of clergy or the Church, such as PCC members, lay ministers, churchwardens, parish and Church school staff;
- victims and survivors who are part of the Church;
- the family, relatives and friends of the respondent.

It can happen that the members of a Church community are divided in their attitude and loyalties, with some expressing disbelief about what is being suggested and compassion towards the respondent, while others blaming the respondent or the Church Body, and expressing strong anger towards one or the other. Feelings of disbelief, anger and fear that others known to them may have been abused can impact on a Church community's culture and can persist for years. Those responsible for the leadership of a Church community may

need to consider undertaking mediation and community healing efforts to address such impacts.

As a result, it is important to consider and appropriately manage how the circumstances surrounding an allegation will be communicated to those groups and the support that may need to be put in place. What those communications and support may need to look like will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the SCMG.

Communications

Care should be taken as to who shares information about the case, how it is shared and with whom, as well as the impact that this can have on those receiving the information.

The SCMG should decide whether and what communications are released to the members of the Church community. This should be done with advice from the relevant Communications Director. Advice from a Diocesan Registrar, legal advisor or the Data Protection Officer may also need to be sought.

Any information released publicly should be proportionate and should not compromise any disciplinary or statutory processes, nor the confidentiality of those involved. Where appropriate, any communications should be agreed with statutory services, and the respondent should be informed what is going to be shared. Whatever is shared in the public domain should be minimal and necessary.

Most communications released should include a reference to the Safeguarding Officer's contact details – ensuring that, where there is the possibility of multiple victims linked to the respondent, those victims have an avenue for disclosure. This also applies to victims who decide to disclose their experiences of abuse as a result of seeing the communications, even if their experiences are not linked to the respondent. References to available support should also be included. Where the case involves a significant number of complainants, consideration should be given as to whether a dedicated support function needs to be offered.

4A.6 - Disciplinary Procedures

The assessments carried out by the Safeguarding Officer are focused on risk management and the provision of support to affected parties. They are not part of a disciplinary process, although there are clear links between the safeguarding and risk management process and

the Church's disciplinary process. Disciplinary processes focus on any type of concern or allegation which may amount to misconduct, whilst Safeguarding Officers (and SCMGs) are only involved in the management of safeguarding concerns or allegations.

The Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 and Clergy Discipline Rules 2005 set out the process to be followed while the Clergy Discipline Measure: Code of Practice and the Statutory Guidance provide additional guidance.

Anyone with a proper interest can bring an allegation of misconduct under the CDM, including complainants. This can happen before, during or after a safeguarding process under this Code has been initiated. In all cases, it is recommended that raising a CDM complaint is considered by the Safeguarding Officers and the SCMG at the earliest opportunity.

If proceedings under the CDM are initiated before or during a safeguarding process, Safeguarding Officers and other members of the SCMG should consider if the safeguarding process needs to be paused and if they need to wait for the outcome of the disciplinary process. Whilst this is not an obligation and the two processes can run in parallel, there are a number of considerations that will influence this decision:

- timing – Is the outcome of a disciplinary process imminent?
- risk level – Have measures to manage risk (e.g. suspension) already been put in place as part of the disciplinary process?
- duplication of process stages or steps – Has an investigation already been carried out as part of the disciplinary process? Can relevant aspects of that investigation be shared with the Safeguarding Officer and the SCMG, to avoid the complainant and the respondent being asked to provide the same information again?
- support – Whilst the disciplinary process is ongoing, do the complainant, the respondent and the parish or Church community affected have appropriate support?

The overarching principles to follow in such cases are:

- avoiding any duplication between the two processes, as far as possible;
- ensuring that support to the complainant, respondent and the parish or Church community is made available; and
- considering if any risks arising from the specific allegation are already managed under the disciplinary process, in which case the Safeguarding Officer or the SCMG may not need to undertake separate actions.

Safeguarding Officers may decide, in consultation with other members of the SCMG, to raise a CDM complaint against the respondent at the end of a safeguarding process although they should be mindful of the time limitations set out in the 2003 Measure. In such circumstances, any relevant information gathered during the safeguarding process should be shared with the bishop and form part of the complaint as supporting evidence.

4A.7 - 4A.15 - The aims and scope of safeguarding enquiries

The safeguarding enquiries carried out by Safeguarding Officers are not the equivalent of a police investigation, a social care assessment or an investigation as part of a disciplinary procedure. The enquiries are **not** focused on establishing a respondent's guilt but must be thorough enough to explore and collect all relevant information in order to assess and manage the safeguarding risks linked to a member of clergy's continued activity in the Church. Information gathered through the processes outlined in this Code may be shared with statutory services and may be used to initiate disciplinary processes.

The scope of any safeguarding enquiries carried out by Safeguarding Officers should be clearly defined and linked closely to the allegation and the respondent's role in the Church. Where factual information has been established through other processes, for instance in criminal or civil proceedings or in a disciplinary process, that information should be taken into account.

The SCMG will use the information gathered through these enquiries to determine if, on the balance of probabilities, there is evidence of a safeguarding risk. "On the balance of probabilities" means 'more likely than not'.

As the SCMG considers the information gathered from the lens of identifying indicators of safeguarding risks, they may uncover other indicators of ongoing safeguarding risks, which would need to be assessed and managed.

For the purposes of this Code, the following definitions are used:

- **Substantiated** means that, on the balance of probabilities there is sufficient evidence to substantiate the existence of an ongoing safeguarding risk.
- **Unsubstantiated** means that, on the balance of probabilities there is insufficient evidence to substantiate the existence of an ongoing safeguarding risk.

Risk Assessment – please refer to Section 5

Outcomes, Closure and Long-term risk – please refer to Section 6

Section 4B: Managing safeguarding concerns or allegations[8]: Lay Volunteers

*This Pathway contains **additional** and **specific** requirements and guidance for dealing with allegations against lay volunteers*

Section 1: Triage and Referrals

Section 2: Initial Contact

Section 3: Safeguarding Case Management Group

Section 4B: Lay Volunteers

Introduction and Definitions

4B.1- 4B.2 Initial Response and convening a SCMG

4B.3 The initial case summary and the role of the SCMG

4B.4 Immediate assessment of safeguarding risks

4B.5 Support

4B.6 Impact on Church communities

4B.7 – 4B.15 The aims and scope of safeguarding enquiries

Section 5: Risk Assessment

Section 6: Outcomes, Closure and Long-term risk management

Introduction and definitions

This section sets out the steps, requirements and guidance to be followed in response to safeguarding concerns and allegations where:

- it covers a recent or non-recent concern or allegation; and
- the respondent is alive;

[8] The requirements and guidance in this Code refer both to **safeguarding concerns** and to **safeguarding allegations**. However, for ease of reading, the term allegations is used throughout, and must be taken to include safeguarding concerns

- the respondent is a lay volunteer.

Where the respondent holds a Position of Trust, see section 4A for the legal definition.

For the purposes of this pathway, ordinands are treated as lay volunteers. Where a safeguarding allegation is raised about an ordinand, this pathway applies. It should be noted that the Clergy Discipline Measure does not apply to ordinands, and any concerns about their suitability for ordination should also be referred to the relevant sponsoring Bishop and Theological Education Institution (TEI).

As outlined in Section 4F of this Code, concerns of failure to follow safeguarding requirements may be managed under this pathway, but only in cases in which the circumstances in that section are met. A separate pathway for the management of posthumous safeguarding allegations is included in Section 4D.

Structure

This section is structured into a series of steps that need to be followed when managing allegations involving volunteers. Some steps and requirements may need to be followed in a different order to that presented in this Section, to reflect the specific circumstances of each case. This is only to be done on the advice of statutory services or a Regional Safeguarding Lead (on behalf of the NST).

Initial response and convening a Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG)

Requirements:

Convening a Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG)

4B.1 When managing an allegation about a volunteer, the Safeguarding Officer must convene an SCMG, by following the requirements in Section 3.

4B.2 The Safeguarding Officer must explore what information is held in respect of the respondent and, if that information could be relevant to a police or social services investigation, they must share it with the relevant authorities.

Guidance

4B.1 - 4B2 - Convening a Safeguarding Case Management Group

Deciding if the respondent is a volunteer

The Church of England benefits from the contributions and good will of a high number of volunteers, which hold a diverse range of roles within the Church. There is no legal definition for the term "volunteer". However, for the purposes of this Code, the definition provided by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has been adopted. The NCVO defines volunteering as: "any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives". Central to this is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual.[9]

If there is uncertainty as to whether a person is an employee or a volunteer, Safeguarding Officers should seek HR advice.

For the purposes of this section lay volunteers can broadly be grouped in three categories:

- Licensed Church Officers – This category refers to members of the laity who have a licence from a Bishop to deliver a specific role within the Church, for example, readers, lay workers / licensed lay ministers.

[9] For more details on what constitutes volunteering, see the NCVO guidance on "What is volunteering?".

- authorised or commissioned Church Officers – This category refers to those members of the laity who are part of a recognised diocesan scheme, or who have been officially authorised or commissioned by the relevant bishop or diocesan office to deliver a specific role within the Church, for example Children, Youth and Family volunteers, musicians, worship assistants / facilitators.
- locally recognised Church Officers – This category captures those lay officers who are not licensed, authorised or commissioned by a bishop or a diocesan office, and whose role is more likely to be linked to local recognition and arrangements put in place by the PCC or incumbent.

It is important to note, however, that a lay officer who holds one of the roles specified above is not always a volunteer. If a contract of employment is in place, then that person is an employee, and any safeguarding allegations raised in relation to them should be managed following the employees pathway (4E) within this Code. As such, in order to determine which pathway should be followed in the application of this Code, Safeguarding Officers must not only consider the title that someone holds, but the exact circumstances of the role. The following questions may help Safeguarding Officers in deciding which pathway to follow:

- Does the lay officer have a contract of employment?
- Does the lay officer receive a salary or some other form of formal remuneration?
- Is the Church Body or TEI contributing to the lay officer's pension?
- Is the lay officer subject to formal disciplinary procedures (as opposed to volunteer management)?
- Is the lay officer able to take annual leave and any other leave entitlements (e.g. maternity leave)?

If the answer to the questions above is "yes", then the lay officer is likely to be an employee. In such cases, Church Bodies and TEIs must ensure that they meet their responsibilities under employment law.

Careful consideration should be given to those lay officers who receive a stipend. Lay officers who receive a stipend are generally those who hold an office under Common Tenure. Stipends do not imply an employment relationship, so those individuals should be considered volunteers and any allegations about them should be managed using the processes outlined within this pathway. For certain roles, such as deaconesses, readers and lay workers, the Ecclesiastical Office (Terms of Service) Measure 2009 specifically mentions that no relationship of employment exists in situations in which a person undertakes one of these roles and receives a stipend - see section 9(6). It should be noted that a remunerated, licenced lay person may be either employed, or on Common Tenure – their status depends on their specific

circumstances. It is best practice to take HR advice as early as possible when dealing with a remunerated, licenced lay person.

Expectations regarding volunteers

If a volunteer is being recruited to undertake substantial contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults, then the “Safer Recruitment and People Management” House of Bishops’ guidance must be followed. It is, however, good practice to have some form of recruitment process in place for other roles. During recruitment, expectations from volunteers, including around conduct and safeguarding, must be outlined in role descriptions and person specifications. Once a person has been recruited to a volunteer role, a Volunteer Agreement must be put in place. The relevant safeguarding policies, learning and development, safe practice and conduct standards expected from that person in their volunteer role must be shared and discussed with them. Such standards may include requirements around lone working, an emphasis on the need to maintain appropriate professional boundaries, and expectations around contact outside of the volunteering activity. Volunteers new to their role must be supported, to ensure that they understand those standards and are well-equipped to meet them. Volunteers should be informed about the steps that will be followed in cases in which those standards are not met. They should also be told where and how they can seek advice and support if they feel they cannot meet those standards, or if they are unsure how to deliver their volunteering responsibilities in a way that meets the expected standards.

It is good practice for Church Bodies to bring these standards together in a volunteer management policy.

It is important to note that volunteers are not subject to the same disciplinary processes as employees, as the expectations around their conduct differ, and they do not have the same rights under the law as employees. It is recommended that Church Bodies that rely heavily on volunteers put in place a bespoke process for dealing with conduct matters involving volunteers. This should be a proportionate process and ensures that the boundaries between volunteering and employment are made clear.

Where a safeguarding allegation is made against a volunteer, but it relates to matters in their personal life, the Safeguarding Officer must exercise their professional judgement when determining whether or not to act on that information. This involves an assessment of whether the information received has any bearing on the volunteer’s role in the Church, particularly any work with children, young people or vulnerable adults. Where the Safeguarding Officer decides to initiate relevant safeguarding processes, a clear rationale must be recorded in the

case notes, which should detail which aspects of that information are relevant for safeguarding purposes, how and why they are relevant.

When assessing a case where the information available refers to a volunteer's personal life, the Safeguarding Officer should work closely with any statutory services involved and take their advice. The Safeguarding Officer's assessment of the case should be proportionate and should not lead to an unnecessary and intrusive collection of information about someone's personal life. For every question asked and action undertaken as part of the assessment, there should be a clear rationale and a link back to an aspect of the respondent's work within the Church.

The above advice also applies to situations in which an allegation is made about someone in a volunteer's close family. Generally, these situations will not trigger a safeguarding process under this Code, unless there is a rationale to argue that the volunteer has displayed concerning behaviours in how they dealt with that matter (e.g. where they actively covered up abuse inflicted by a member of their family, or where they appear to believe that abuse inflicted by a member of their family is acceptable). This does not apply to situations in which the family member is directly involved in the life the Church, as an employee, volunteer or otherwise, in which case they are a Church Officer, and this Code will apply to them and the relevant process outlined in this Code will be followed.

Responding to safeguarding allegations involving non-recent events, where the respondent has left the Church Body

Complainants who come forward to disclose non-recent abuse will have varied reasons for doing so: it might have taken them a long time to look at the events that they have experienced and see them as abuse, they might have felt scared to disclose whilst the respondent was still in active ministry, they may express a need or desire to achieve closure on past traumatic experiences, and / or they may wish to prevent others from becoming victims of abuse.

Regardless of when the events disclosed are alleged to have taken place, complainants should be taken seriously, and their disclosures should not be ignored. A trauma-informed approach should be applied, and support must be offered in line with the Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse guidance. Specific care should be given to the fact that the complainant might feel a sense of disappointment and / or frustration in situations in which limited action can be undertaken regarding the respondent (e.g. when a disciplinary process cannot be followed). Being open and clear about what processes can and cannot be followed from the start will help manage the complainant's expectations.

Assessing and managing any ongoing risk

Where an allegation refers to non-recent events and the subject of the allegation is alive, a Safeguarding Officer may be faced with different scenarios, including if the volunteer continues to be actively involved in ministry in the Church of England, but has moved to a different diocese or Church Body, or when they have:

- retired;
- been removed from their substantive role
- has left the Church of England entirely and moved to a role in a different denomination or a role outside of the Church.

There are specific considerations that a Safeguarding Officer would have to keep in mind when acting in each of these scenarios.

If a volunteer has left the respective Church Body or diocese but continues to be actively involved in a different diocese or Church Body within the Church of England, then the Safeguarding Officer should share the allegation with the Safeguarding Officer in that diocese (in line with the Internal Information Sharing Plan) and agree how the allegation will be taken forward and by whom. The requirements, advice and procedures set out in this Code would then apply.

If the volunteer has moved to a role outside of the Church, then from a safeguarding perspective the Safeguarding Officer, would need to consider the following:

- If the allegation is that a crime might have been committed or that a child, young person or vulnerable adult has been, or might be at risk of being, harmed, then the relevant statutory services would need to be informed. Some police forces have specific teams that deal with allegations of non-recent abuse.

- There may be transferrable risks associated with the respondent, particularly in cases in which the respondent has moved, or may have moved, on to a role that involves contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Close partnership working with statutory authorities is essential in these circumstances, as a Church Body may not always have information about a respondent's subsequent roles outside of the Church.

- Depending on the nature of the allegation, the respondent might have had connections with other individuals who may continue in roles within the Church and may pose a

safeguarding risk, for instance there may be the possibility that a different Church Officer covered up or failed to act to prevent abuse.

- Depending on the nature of the allegation, if the processes put in place to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults have failed to do so, their effectiveness needs to be reviewed and improved.

In such circumstances, Church Bodies would still need to follow the requirements and processes outlined in this Code, but the extent of any safeguarding enquiries and risk assessment carried out may be limited and would need to be proportionate. Disciplinary processes and procedures would only be applicable if the volunteer had moved to another role in a different diocese or Church Organisation.

If information is held or becomes available about a respondent's current role, then the need to share information about the allegation / concern with the new employer or the new religious organisation / denomination should be considered. This will generally be done only in very limited circumstances, usually via the police, LADO or other relevant statutory authority. The key questions that should be asked in these cases are:

- Are statutory services involved? Have they been informed? If yes, follow their advice.
- Does the individual's new role involve work with children, young people and vulnerable adults?
- What is the nature of the allegation or concern? Based on the records and information gathered, if the allegation or concern is substantiated, is there a continued risk of harm to children, young people and vulnerable adults?
- Would children, young people and vulnerable adults potentially be at risk if information is not shared?
- Have the Diocesan Registrar / the relevant legal advisor and the relevant Data Protection Officer provided advice whether the information about the allegation or concern should be shared? If not, seek their advice.

Any information shared needs to be necessary, accurate and proportionate, with a clear rationale and aim, and should meet the requirements under data protection legislation. The Internal Information Sharing Plan covers information sharing with the Church in Wales but does not cover information sharing with other religious organisations or Christian denominations.

If they are now simply a member of the worshipping community, the Safeguarding Officer would need to determine firstly if the requirements are met for any referrals to statutory

services, and whether a risk assessment as per Section 4C of this Code is required. It may be that there is no action which can be taken in respect of the alleged respondent, however support must always be provided to the complainant.

If abuse took place, Church Bodies should reflect on their safeguarding arrangements and understand where such arrangements have potentially gone wrong and why. Organisational learning from such incidents and addressing any identified weaknesses or gaps, as well as any cultural factors, are important aspects of promoting safer practice and environments. Further guidance can be found in the Code of Practice on Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

The role of the SCMG and safeguarding enquiries

The requirements and guidance in this pathway should be followed alongside those in Section 3.

Requirements:

The role of the SCMG

4B.3 Ahead of the initial SCMG meeting, the Safeguarding Officer must prepare an initial case summary.

4B.4 The Safeguarding Officer must assess any immediate safeguarding risks and decide if any mitigations need to be put in place in the short-term i.e. interim Church Safety Plan, suspension, voluntary step down from duties, temporary revocation of licence.

4B.5 The SCMG must consider the support that is, or should be, provided to the complainant, the respondent and their immediate families or dependants.

4B.6 The SCMG must consider the impact of the allegation, and any actions taken in response, on the wider Church community and put in place appropriate measures to address any negative impacts and mitigate risks.

4B.7 The Safeguarding Officer must decide if the relevant disciplinary processes (where these are applicable) should be initiated.

Safeguarding enquiries

4B.8 The Safeguarding Officer must decide the scope of any subsequent safeguarding enquiries.

4B.9 Complainants and respondents must have the option to be accompanied by a companion, who can provide emotional support, in any interviews or meetings.

4B.10 The Safeguarding Officer must compile the information gathered through any subsequent enquiries in a written report, which must be presented to the SCMG.

4B.11 The aims of any safeguarding enquiries are to:

- gather relevant information and establish facts; and
- identify any ongoing safeguarding risks;
- establish what the needs of the complainant/respondent are and how to meet those.

4B.12 If interviews are carried out, the Safeguarding Officer must make a written record of each interview, share it with the relevant interviewee to confirm its accuracy, and save it in the case files.

4B.13 Based on the information gathered, the Safeguarding Officer, in consultation with the SCMG, must determine if, on the balance of probabilities there is sufficient evidence to substantiate the existence of an ongoing safeguarding risk. Where the determination is that there is not sufficient evidence, the matter is unsubstantiated.

4B.14 If the outcome is 'substantiated' the SCMG must follow the requirements in section 5 (Risk Assessment).

4B.15 If the outcome is 'unsubstantiated', the case must be closed at this stage and the SCMG must follow the requirements for closure in section 6 (Outcomes, closure and the long-term management of risk).

Guidance

4B.3 - The initial case summary and the role of the SCMG

Ahead of the initial meeting of an SCMG, the Safeguarding Officer should prepare an initial case summary, which outlines the information known at that stage and any processes already initiated or that need SCMG consideration. The purpose of the initial case summary is to provide the SCMG with the background information needed in order to advise and make

decisions on next steps in the management of a case. Generally, an initial case summary will include the following:

- details of the initial allegation, including a summary of any information provided by the complainant and the respondent and any relevant information from existing records, e.g. past safeguarding concerns recorded on the NSCMS or in the clergy personnel records;
- input and plans from statutory services, or the rationale for not making a referral to statutory services;
- a dynamic assessment of risk, based on information known at that stage, and any proposed mitigations in the short-term i.e. Interim Church Safety Plan, voluntary step down from duties, suspension, temporary revocation of licence or authorisation/commission:
- consideration of other referrals that have been, or may need to be, made, in line with the requirements in Section 1.
- details of any gaps in information that impede the effective assessment of the allegation and any safeguarding risks, as well plans for how this information may be gathered;
- details of the support put in place for the complainant, the respondent and their immediate families / dependants, and any proposals for additional support that may be needed;
- if appropriate, proposals for the communications and support that may be needed for the Church community impacted by the allegation and any actions taken in response.

The focus of each SCMG meeting will differ with the ongoing management of the case. Decisions made during SCMG meetings should be regularly reviewed in light of new information becoming available, to ensure that they remain timely and relevant. A template for an Initial Case summary is available.

4B.4 - Immediate assessment of safeguarding risks

Interim Church Safety Plan

An Interim Church Safety Plan is focused on the short-term management of risk – i.e. whilst safeguarding and other processes are ongoing. An Interim Church Safety Plan is not based on a formal or complete risk assessment, but a dynamic consideration of risk by the

Safeguarding Officer, as relevant information is being gathered. Interim Church Safety Plans follow the same requirements as regular Church Safety Plans (Outcomes, closure and the long-term management of risk).

Interim Church Safety Plans need to be agreed and signed by the respondent. Any refusal to sign the Plan should be considered by the SCMG. In such cases, alternative ways to manage risk need to be identified.

Suspension and revocation of licence, authorisation or commission

A volunteer will normally fulfil a role in a Church Body at the invitation of either the bishop, the parish priest or another governance body, such as the PCC. Volunteers may be licenced or authorised / commissioned by a bishop, may be part of diocesan scheme or may have local arrangements with a priest or a governance body to fulfil their role.

Normally volunteers will not have the same protections under the law as employees. Therefore, with certain exceptions arising under ecclesiastical law (explained below), a volunteer may be asked at any point to temporarily or permanently end their volunteering responsibilities. However, it is important that decision makers treat volunteers fairly and provide them with clear reasons why their contributions are no longer needed.

When an allegation is raised against a volunteer and the SCMG considers that immediate action needs to be undertaken to mitigate safeguarding risks whilst more information is gathered and a fuller risk assessment is carried out, the SCMG may recommend to the person or body to either suspend or temporarily end a respondent's volunteering responsibilities. Depending on the exact arrangements that are in place, this may mean that:

- a licenced volunteer may be suspended or have their licence temporarily revoked by the relevant bishop;
- an authorised or commissioned volunteer may have their authorisation temporarily withdrawn by the relevant bishop;
- a locally recognised volunteer may be asked by the incumbent or governance body to temporarily pause any volunteering responsibilities within the Church.

Suspension is a neutral act, in that a determination of fact has yet to be made, which aims to ensure that cases can be assessed in a dispassionate manner and to protect all parties involved, for instance, by ensuring no further accusations are made against the respondent and complainants are protected. This should be explained and emphasised to respondents,

and the support of a Link Person should be offered to respondents during this time to maintain contact with the Church and provide emotional support. A decision to suspend someone must be reasonable, evidenced and followed up in writing.

Voluntarily step down from duties

In certain circumstances, a respondent may voluntarily choose to temporarily step down from their duties. It is unlikely that this will ever be an appropriate course of action to take where there is a safeguarding risk. There may be exceptions, for example where there is a procedural breach under Pathway 4F in extenuating circumstances, but not when there has been an allegation of direct abuse, and an appropriate determination of risk made.

4B.5 - Support

Support to victims and survivors of church-related abuse must be provided in line with the requirements in the Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse guidance.

The availability of a senior member of clergy to meet with concerned members of the Church can provide an important opportunity for those persons to express any concerns or feelings. Assistance in managing those feelings, worries, anxiety and any crisis in faith should be provided. Some parishioners may want to pray together, and consideration should be given to how this can be facilitated.

Stress may also be experienced by members of clergy or parish staff/volunteers, who may have an increased workload as a result, as well as trying to support parishioners and coming to terms with their own feelings on the situation. Arrangements for what support may be appropriate to put in place for those individuals should be considered by the SCMG, and may include the availability of a senior member of clergy, or support from a priest from a neighbouring parish.

4B.6 - Impact on Church communities

When a volunteer steps down from duties because of a safeguarding allegation, this can have a significant impact on:

- members of the Church community (e.g. parishioners);

- other volunteer or elected members of the Church, such as PCC members, lay ministers, churchwardens, parish and Church school staff;
- victims and survivors who are part of the Church;
- the family, relatives and friends of the respondent.

As a result, it is important to consider and appropriately manage how the circumstances surrounding an allegation will be communicated to those groups and the support that may need to be put in place. What those communications and support may need to look like will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the SCMG.

It can happen that the members of a Church community are divided in their attitude and loyalties, with some expressing disbelief about what is being suggested and compassion towards the respondent, while others blaming the respondent or the Church Body, and expressing strong anger towards one or the other. It is not unusual for people to come together to support and advocate on behalf of the respondent. On the other hand, feelings of disbelief, anger and fear that others known to them may have been abused can impact on a Church community's culture and can persist for years. Those responsible for the leadership of a Church community may need to consider undertaking mediation and community healing efforts to address such impacts

Communications

Care should be taken as to who shares information about the case, how it is shared and with whom, as well as the impact that this can have on those receiving the information, including the respondent and complainant.

The SCMG should decide whether and what communications are released to the members of the Church community. This should be done with advice from the relevant Director of Communications. Advice from a Diocesan Registrar or the relevant Data Protection Officer may also need to be sought. The respondent should be invited to express their wishes regarding the way in which communications should be released, including the way in which communications should be released to their family members or relatives and close friends. Consideration should also be given to protect the complainant's safety and wellbeing.

Any information released publicly should be proportionate and should not compromise any disciplinary and/or statutory processes. Where appropriate, any communications released should be agreed with statutory services, and the respondent should be informed what is going to be shared. Whatever is shared in the public domain should be minimal and necessary –

sharing detailed information about the respondent and their life and activity in the Church, where there is not a clear reason to do so, would not be proportionate.

Most communications released should include a reference to the Safeguarding Officer's contact details – ensuring that, where there is the possibility of multiple victims linked to the respondent, those victims have an avenue for disclosure. This also applies to victims who decide to disclose their experiences of abuse as a result of seeing the communications, even if their experiences are not linked to the respondent. References to available support should also be included.

4B.7- 4B.15 - The aims and scope of safeguarding enquiries

The safeguarding enquiries carried out by Safeguarding Officers are not the equivalent of a police investigation, a social care assessment or an investigation as part of a disciplinary procedure. The enquiries are **not** focused on establishing a respondent's guilt. They are instead focused on the assessment and management of safeguarding risks linked to a volunteer's continued activity in the Church. However, information gathered through the processes outlined in this Code may be shared with statutory services and may be used to initiate disciplinary processes.

The scope of any safeguarding enquiries carried out by Safeguarding Officers should be clearly defined and linked closely to the allegation and the respondent's role in the Church. Where factual information has been established through other processes, for instance in criminal or civil proceedings or in a disciplinary process, that information should be taken into account.

The SCMG will use the information gathered as a result of these enquiries to determine if, on the balance of probabilities there is evidence of a safeguarding risk. "On the balance of probabilities" means 'more likely than not'.

As the SCMG considers the information gathered from the lens of identifying indicators of safeguarding risks, they may uncover other indicators of ongoing safeguarding risks, which would need to be assessed and managed.

For the purposes of this Code, the following definitions are used:

- **Substantiated** means that, on the balance of probabilities there is sufficient evidence to substantiate the existence of an ongoing safeguarding risk.

- **Unsubstantiated** means that, on the balance of probabilities there is insufficient evidence to substantiate the existence of an ongoing safeguarding risk.

Risk Assessment – please refer to Section 5

Outcomes, Closure and Long-term risk – please refer to Section 6

Section 4C: Managing safeguarding risks in the Church Community

This is a specific pathway only for non-Church Officers.

Section 1: Triage and Referrals

Section 2: Initial Contact

Section 3: Safeguarding Case Management Group

Section 4C: Managing Safeguarding risks in the Church Community

Introduction and Definitions

4C.1 Deciding whether the person is a risk

4C.2 – 4C.6 Approach to risk assessment

4C.7 – 4C.9 The Church Safety Plan

4C.10 Refusal to sign a Church Safety Plan

4C.11 – 4C.12 Church Safety Plans Reviews

4C.13 Sharing information about the Church Safety Plan

4C.14 Breaches of a Church Safety Plan

Section 5: Risk Assessment

Section 6: Outcomes, Closure and Long-term risk management

Introduction and definitions

The Church of England, based on the message of the Gospel, opens its doors to all. This includes children, young people and vulnerable adults, but it also includes those persons who have committed offences, sometimes of a very serious nature, and who may have their own vulnerabilities. There is evidence that supports the important role of faith and the role of the Church in the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders and ex-offenders in society.[10] In order to ensure that church settings remain safe and accessible to all, a planned and considered welcome to those who may pose safeguarding risks is needed.

Further details on the right of persons to attend church services is contained in Appendix 4.

[10] - Byron Johnson and Sung Joon Jang, **Crime and Religion: assessing the role of the faith factor**, *Contemporary Issues in Criminological Theory and Research: The Role of Social Institutions*, November 2010.
- Fergus McNeill and Beth Weaver, **Changing Lives? Desistence Research and Offender Management**, Report No. 03/2010, *The Scottish Centre for Crime & Justice Research*, June 2010.

This section sets out the steps, requirements and guidance to be followed in situations where a person who is not a Church Officer may present a safeguarding risk to children, young people or vulnerable adults. This pathway does not deal with Church Officers who present a risk, this is dealt with in Sections 4A, B and D-G.

In this section, the term “Church community” is used to refer to a group of people who come together to share their Christian faith or attend Church-related activities, usually around a central point such as a parish or cathedral. These people may come into the Church for brief periods of time or may be regular attendees.

Requirements:

4C.1 The Safeguarding Officer must determine whether the individual in question is a person who may present a safeguarding risk to children, young people or vulnerable adults.

Risk assessments

4C.2 Where a risk assessment has been carried out in respect of the respondent by statutory services, the Safeguarding Officer must seek to gain a copy of that assessment. Where such a risk assessment is not suitable for the management of risk within the Church context, the Safeguarding Officer must carry out a separate risk assessment.

4C.3 The risk assessment carried out by the Safeguarding Officer must focus on assessing any specific risks in the Church context, and not the general level of risk as assessed by statutory services.

4C.4 When carrying out a risk assessment, the Safeguarding Officer must use the approved forms provided by the National Safeguarding Team.

4C.5 The Safeguarding Officer must provide the subject of the risk assessment with the opportunity to comment on the draft risk assessment report for accuracy of facts and must share the final report with that person. Where a report contains references to third parties, the Safeguarding Officer must consider sharing a redacted version of the report, having taken the necessary data protection advice.

4C.6 The Safeguarding Officer must include in the risk assessment report a set of actions focused on the effective management of any risks identified, which should inform the Church Safety Plan.

Church Safety Plan

4C.7 The Safeguarding Officer, in consultation with the subject of the plan and any relevant statutory agencies or parties must draw up a Church Safety Plan.

4C.8 A Church Safety Plan must:

- be proportionate to the risks identified within a church context, including their likelihood and impact;
- consider the support that can be put in place for the subject of the Plan and / or the wider Church community to enhance protective factors and minimise risks;
- be drafted using the approved templates provided;
- specify how compliance with the Plan will be monitored and by whom, including how any breaches will be reported; and
- be dated and signed by all relevant parties (i.e. the Safeguarding Officer, the subject of the Plan and anyone involved in support and monitoring arrangements).

4C.9 The Church Safety Plan must specify any requirements that are placed on an individual in order to maintain their own safety and the safety of others.

4C.10 Where the subject of a Church Safety Plan refuses to agree to or comply with the Plan, the Safeguarding Officer must ensure that all reasonable, proportionate, and lawful steps are taken to manage the identified safeguarding risk to the Church community.

4C.11 The Church Safety Plan must contain a review date, allow for earlier review if circumstances change, and be reviewed at least every 12 months. Reviews must be carried out by the Safeguarding Officer (or nominated member of their team) in consultation with the subject of the plan, relevant statutory agencies and anyone involved in providing support and monitoring the arrangements set out in the plan.

4C.12 If the Safeguarding Officer is satisfied at any review that the level of risk is such that a plan is no longer needed, the plan must be ended, and all relevant parties must be notified. The decision to end a plan must be made in

consultation with the subject of the plan, relevant statutory agencies and anyone involved in support and monitoring arrangements.

4C.13 In the event of a person who is subject to a Church Safety Plan moving and continuing to worship in a different diocese, the Safeguarding Officer must ensure that a copy of the Church Safety Plan is shared with the Safeguarding Officer in the new diocese.

4C.14 Where the PSO becomes aware of a breach of the Church Safety Plan, they must report the breaches to the DSO. Where statutory agencies are involved, the DSO must inform the statutory services of the breach.

Guidance

4C.1 - Deciding whether the person is a risk

Within a Church community, there will be individuals about whom nothing is known, but who may pose a safeguarding risk. It is for this reason that the most effective risk management tool is to have a strong safeguarding culture. This means that everyone is alert to the possibility and signs that someone may have been abused or may be an abuser and is confident in what to do about it.

For the purposes of this section, a "person who may present a safeguarding risk to children, young people or vulnerable adults" refers to any individual who has been charged with, cautioned or convicted of an offence which:

- has harmed a child or a vulnerable adult;
- has caused a child or a vulnerable adult to be harmed;
- has put a child or a vulnerable adult at risk of harm;
- has attempted to harm a child or a vulnerable adult; and / or
- has incited another person to harm a child or a vulnerable adult.

For the avoidance of doubt, it also includes persons who are under or subject to a civil order, such as a Sexual Harm Prevention Order or similar, or who have engaged in conduct that has harmed or might have harmed a child, young person or vulnerable adult, where this conduct has not resulted in a charge, caution or conviction – for instance, they might have received a warning, a penalty notice or a fine but a level of risk to others has still been identified. This is

particularly important given that statutory services must respond to (and meet) legislative requirements that the Church is not bound by.

The decision whether someone is a “person who may present a safeguarding risk to children, young people or vulnerable adults” ultimately sits with the Safeguarding Officer. In making this decision, the Safeguarding Officer needs to take into account the nature of the offence or alleged offence or behaviour and consider whether applying this guidance is proportionate in a worshipping context. This includes situations where statutory investigations or processes have determined no further action, or where there has been no finding of guilt, because there may remain safeguarding concerns that meet the above criteria which require a plan to be in place for the safety of everyone. The important factor here is that the actions to mitigate the identified risk are proportionate.

Sources of information

Information about a person who poses safeguarding risks might come to the attention of a DSO / CSO in various ways – either through the person sharing that information themselves, through statutory agencies (e.g. police, probation) or through other members of the Church community.

For some violent and sexual offenders, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) are in place to ensure the appropriate management of risk. These arrangements generally bring together the police, probation and prison services, as well as other relevant parties. A Safeguarding Officer will generally not be part of these arrangements, but:

- should ensure that they are aware of any arrangements relevant to their local area;
- should ensure that information relevant for the management of risk is shared with those agencies; and
- may seek and receive information from those agencies (e.g. they may receive information that an offender is on the Violent and Sex Offender Register – ViSOR).

4C.2 – 4C.6 - The approach to risk assessment

Risk assessments play an important role in making Church communities safe for all those who participate in them. If a risk assessment regarding a person who poses safeguarding risks has not been provided by statutory services or if the information within a risk assessment is not sufficient for the management of risk in the Church context, the Safeguarding Officer will carry

out their own assessment. It is essential, however, that the Safeguarding Officer maintains contact with the relevant statutory services (e.g. the police, probation) throughout and involves them in the risk assessment process.

The purpose of a risk assessment is to assess, or to contribute to the assessment of risk of harm to children, young people or vulnerable adults, that may be presented by an individual. Such risks are considered within the context of that person being a member of a Church community and considering the ability of a Church community to manage such risks.

Each assessment helps to achieve the following:

- the identification and evaluation of risks of harm to children, young people or vulnerable adults, in terms of their likelihood and impact;
- how risks may be addressed or managed, and what safety would look like for individual children, young people or vulnerable adults;
- a shared understanding and common approach by those with safeguarding responsibilities to the management and reduction of risk; and
- a plan which seeks to ensure the safety of children, young people or vulnerable adults, and to address the safety of the person who presents a risk.

The Church's approach to risk assessment is underpinned by the following principles:

- a commitment to a just, fair and proportionate process;
- a non-discriminatory approach to risk assessment and risk management;
- an approach to risk assessment which is evidence-led and objective; and
- communicating well and including respondents in the process, which is done with their involvement, rather than to them.

Additional guidelines on the Church's approach to risk assessment can be found on the Safeguarding Learning Portal.

The Safeguarding Officer must use the National Safeguarding Team approved templates when carrying out a risk assessment and preparing a risk assessment report.

Engaging the person who may pose a safeguarding risk in the risk assessment process

When carrying out a risk assessment it is good practice for the Safeguarding Officer to supply the subject of the risk assessment with a clear statement which:

- explains why the risk assessment is required;
- identifies who will be involved in the assessment;
- explains how the assessment will be carried out; and
- explains that a copy of the final risk assessment report will be provided to them and may also be shared with others for the purposes of managing the identified risk.

4C.7 – 4C.9 - The Church Safety Plan

All persons who may present a safeguarding risk to the Church community and who seek to join or continue to be part of a Church community, must have a Church Safety Plan in place.

The aim of a Church Safety Plan is to set clear boundaries which allow an individual who may present a safeguarding risk to join or continue to be part of a Church community safely. A Church Safety Plan is not meant to be punitive in nature. Church Safety Plans can be put in place to protect the victims, other members of the Church and the subject of the Plan. The intention behind setting certain boundaries is to acknowledge risks that have been identified and find proportionate ways to manage them.

Church Safety Plans are most effective when they are drafted in a collaborative manner. The Safeguarding Officer, statutory partners, the subject of the Plan and anyone involved in monitoring the Plan (e.g. churchwardens, incumbents, PCC members, PSOs) must be involved in drafting it and must sign it. Other relevant parties may also be invited to contribute to the development of the Plan, as needed. All parties involved should ensure that the requirements contained within the Plan are sufficient and proportionate for the management of the risks identified, as well as enforceable.

The drafting of the terms of the Plan should be informed by any risk assessments carried out and should include considerations of both risks and protective factors. When drafting a Plan, Safeguarding Officers and others are asked to consider what the risks within the Church context are, what is working well, and what can be done to further mitigate the identified risks. Importantly, the needs of victims and survivors must be central to any discussions about a Plan. Where relevant, restrictions that individuals are under from statutory partners should be reflected within any Plan that is put in place by the Church. Consultation should take place with relevant statutory agencies, such as the police or probation service and other relevant parties, such as the parish priest, parish safeguarding officer and churchwardens.

Careful consideration should be given to situations in which the victim and / or their family attend the same church – their needs must be prioritised, and the situation must be managed with sensitivity. In certain cases, it may be necessary to encourage the subject of the Plan to attend a different service to ensure that the victim and / or their family can continue to be part of a Church community safely. Unless there are legal restrictions in place, this cannot be enforced through the Church Safety Plan, and therefore careful communication is required.

The types of requirements that may be included in a Church Safety Plan, include:

- not meeting children, young people and / or vulnerable adults alone on Church ground;
- stopping and avoiding any contact with the victim and their family;
- attending designated meetings only;
- sitting apart from children, young people and / or vulnerable adults during service;
- staying away from areas of the building where children, young people and / or vulnerable adults meet;
- only attending a house / home group where there are no children, young people and / or vulnerable adults;
- declining hospitality where there are children, young people and / or vulnerable adults present;
- never working or being part of a mixed-age group that includes children, young people and / or vulnerable adults;
- taking no official role in the Church or any role of responsibility where they are trusted by others[11].
- attending services at a particular time of day.

The Safeguarding Officer should monitor the overall compliance of an individual with the Plan, but compliance with specific requirements may be delegated to other relevant members of the Church, for instance, parish safeguarding officers, churchwardens or incumbents. Anyone involved in the monitoring of the Plan will need to meet with the subject regularly, maintain records of any contact and share those records with the Safeguarding Officer or relevant statutory agencies as needed. Ultimately, the risks that an individual may pose will be held by the relevant PCC or other governance board. In their roles as trustees, PCC members, Cathedral Chapter members and others have a responsibility to manage safeguarding risks

[11] Individuals included in a barred list or who have been convicted of certain offences are disqualified from holding specific offices in the Church, including membership of a PCC, deanery synod, diocesan synod or the General Synod, see the Church Representation Rules 2022 (as amended), Rule 68.

within their organisation[12] and should work closely with the Safeguarding Officer to ensure they are satisfied that safeguarding risks are appropriately managed.

Safeguarding Officers should ensure that all the key information regarding a Church Safety Plan, including a copy of each agreed version of the Plan, is saved on the relevant systems. This should include information about referrals, meetings held, decisions and outcomes, including the rationale for all of these.

Church Bodies will need to make it clear to those individuals who are subject to a Church Safety Plan what data will be processed and why, and where and for how long that data will be stored. Church Bodies can include this information in a Privacy Notice. Guidance on records management is available on the Church of England website, which includes specific guidance on the management of safeguarding records.

4C.10 – Refusal to sign a Church Safety Plan

Where the subject refuses to sign the Church Safety Plan, reasonable, proportionate and documented steps must still be taken to mitigate the risk posed to members of the Church Community. In such circumstances, the Safeguarding Officer must work with those involved in monitoring the individual (e.g. churchwardens, incumbents, PCC members, PSOs) and statutory services, where involved, to determine what measures may lawfully and practically be taken without the individual's agreement.

A Church Safety Plan is for the benefit of both the person who presents safeguarding risks and the Church, in order for someone to worship and participate safely. If a person who poses a safeguarding risk refuses to sign a Church Safety Plan or refuses to comply with the terms of it, consideration should be given as to what other actions could be taken. This might be excluding them from any activities or events which are not open to the public in the same way as a service.

- The Safeguarding Officer must record the refusal and the reasons given in the case files.
- The Safeguarding Officer must consider whether the refusal requires a reassessment of risk and whether further action is required to manage risk.
- Alternative risk management options must be identified and agreed, and the rationale for the approach taken must be recorded.

[12] Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

- Where involved, statutory partners should be made aware of the individual's decision not to sign or comply.
- Where there are uncertainties about information sharing or the implications of refusal, legal advice must be sought.

Such measures may include, where justified by the risk assessment:

- Restricting access to specific Church buildings or spaces, other than for published acts of worship;
- The Churchwarden may direct where the individual sits during acts of worship and require that they are accompanied while on Church grounds;
- Ensuring the individual is not left alone with children, young people or adults at risk by implementing appropriate supervision or stewarding arrangements;
- Limiting attendance to groups or activities that do not involve children, young people or vulnerable adults;
- Declining to appoint or permit the individual to hold any office, ministry, volunteer position or other role involving responsibility, trust or access to children, young people or vulnerable adults;
- Restricting contact with specific individuals, including victims, survivors and their families whilst on Church premises or participating in Church activities, and complying with any applicable court orders or statutory restrictions;
- Where necessary and proportionate, arranging attendance at particular services or at particular times where safeguarding risks can be more effectively managed;
- Refusing entry to the individual where they are not a parishoner.

Any such measures should be based on a current safeguarding risk assessment, be necessary and proportionate to the identified risk, be the least restrictive means of managing that risk, be clearly documented, communicated to those responsible for implementing them, and kept under regular review. Where measures may significantly affect an individual's attendance at public worship or access to church premises, advice should be sought, where appropriate, from the Diocesan Registrar before implementation.

If the person refuses to agree to appropriate restrictions, it may also be necessary, for safeguarding purposes, to make a wider circle of people aware of that person's history. This would need to be discussed with the relevant Data Protection Officer and the Diocesan Registrar first, to ensure that there is sufficient purpose and an appropriate lawful basis for sharing that information.

If other agencies are involved, for example the police or probation service, they must also be informed at the earliest opportunity about a person's unwillingness to agree to or comply with a Church Safety Plan.

4C.11 – 4C.12 - Church Safety Plans Reviews

Church Safety Plans must be kept under regular review to ensure that they remain effective in managing risk. It is good practice for a Plan to be reviewed by the same group who drafted it. As a minimum, the Safeguarding Officer, the respondent and anyone involved in providing support and monitoring the Plan must be part of the review. A review should cover the following considerations:

- what is and is not working;
- whether there have been any breaches;
- a review of any risk and protective factors;
- any changes required to the terms or requirements in the Plan (including whether the Plan continues to be needed); and
- an agreement on the date of the next review.

Reviews might trigger the need for a revised risk assessment. A consideration of all risk factors, including any changing or new factors must be part of the review and should be explored if relevant.

Minutes should be kept from all review meetings and retained in the case files held by the Safeguarding Officer.

Guidance on ending a Church Safety Plan is set out in Section 6 and applies to Plans under this Section.

4C.13 - Sharing information about the Church Safety Plan

It must be made clear to the parties who are involved in drafting, providing support, and monitoring the Plan that the information included will be treated with sensitivity. The information should only be disclosed to the parties involved in providing support or monitoring compliance, provided that it is necessary and proportionate to do so. Only those parties should be informed about the facts, except in situations where material needs to be referred

to statutory services. In certain circumstances, victims, survivors and / or their families may also need to be informed, but this should be done with advice from statutory services and the information shared should be only what is necessary and proportionate. Data protection and legal advice must be sought before sharing any information about the Plan with others and the rationale for sharing the information must be recorded.

Where a person who is subject to a Church Safety Plan attends or seeks to attend, more than one Church setting, the Safeguarding Officer should ensure that the Church Safety Plan and relevant risk management arrangements are applied consistently across those settings. This includes situations where attendance at more than one setting arises by choice or because of restrictions or arrangements put in place to manage risk.

The Safeguarding Officer should ensure that Safeguarding Officers in relevant settings are informed as necessary for safeguarding purposes and that the rationale for sharing information is recorded.

When a person who is subject to a Plan moves to a different diocese within the Church of England or to the Church in Wales, a copy of the Church Safety Plan must be shared by the Safeguarding Officer with the Safeguarding Officer in the receiving diocese, for risk management purposes.[13] The relevant statutory agencies may also need to be informed in these circumstances. The receiving diocese should review the Church Safety Plan and may undertake their own risk assessment to ensure that any new contextual factors have been taken into account and built into the Plan. If a Church Safety Plan was ended before someone decided to move to a different diocese, the Safeguarding Officer should not share a copy of the Church Safety Plan, but should inform the receiving diocese that the individual had a Church Safety Plan in place, for how long and when it was ended.

When a person who is subject to a Plan joins a different denomination (e.g. Roman Catholic, Methodist), the Safeguarding Officer should contact a relevant safeguarding professional within that denomination and inform them about the individual's background. This should only be done after taking data protection / legal advice and the information shared must be minimal – necessary, accurate and proportionate. The relevant statutory agencies may also need to be informed in these circumstances.

[13] Following the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, dioceses, cathedrals, a number of royal peculiars and the National Church Institutions that form part of the Church of England and the Church in Wales have put in place an Information Sharing Agreement. A separate agreement has also been put in place for HR-related information.

4C.14 - Breaches of a Church Safety Plan

Any breach of the Church Safety Plan must be reported to the Safeguarding Officer as soon as it becomes known. If other agencies are involved (e.g. the police, probation service), they must also be informed, at the earliest opportunity, about any breach of the Plan's requirements.

Section 4D: Managing posthumous safeguarding concerns and allegations[14]

This is a specific pathway only for Church Officers who are deceased.

Section 1: Triage and Referrals

Section 2: Initial Contact

Section 3: Safeguarding Case Management Group

Section 4D: Managing posthumous safeguarding concerns and allegations

Introduction

4D.1 Support for the complainant

4D.2 The respondent

4D.3 - 4D.4 Information Gathering

4D.5 - 4D.7 Risk assessment and management

Section 5: Risk Assessment

Section 6: Outcomes, Closure and Long-term risk management

Introduction

Safeguarding concerns and allegations involving individuals who are deceased can be extremely difficult to manage, as the actions that can be taken to assess what has happened and apply the usual criminal justice and disciplinary processes, are limited. Because no formal justice or finding of fact is made, this will impact the complainant's journey to recovery and closure.

In addition, the family members of the respondent may suffer adverse consequences from the allegations being made as it is likely to impact on a person's legacy and how they are remembered.

This section sets out the steps, requirements and guidance to be followed by Church Officers in response to posthumous safeguarding concerns and allegations involving former Church Officers.

[14] The requirements and guidance in this Code refer both to **safeguarding concerns** and to **safeguarding allegations**. However, for ease of reading, the term allegations is used throughout, and must be taken to include safeguarding concerns

This section covers requirements and guidance for both cases of direct abuse allegation and those cases in which a respondent is alleged to have failed to meet safeguarding requirements in the Safeguarding Code of Practice or the House of Bishops' safeguarding guidance.

The complainant

Requirements:

4D1: Support for the complainant must be offered in line with the Responding Well to Victims and Survivors Guidance.

Guidance

4D.1 - Support to the complainant

There may be circumstances in which a safeguarding allegation is raised about a deceased person. In many cases, the complainant might not have been in touch with statutory services before the allegation was raised with the Safeguarding Officer, or they might have been in touch with the police many years before and the police decided to take no further action. It is difficult in these circumstances for the Safeguarding Officer to act. Many complainants will feel that it is too late for them to seek justice, and this may generate pain and negative feelings. In these circumstances, the Safeguarding Officer will need to ensure that they maintain a neutral position. If an allegation is raised against a person who is deceased, and if no process was followed at the time to prove that allegation, the Safeguarding Officer must acknowledge and take seriously the allegation and explain what steps are available. It is important that the complainant is still offered the support they require, and the processes set out in the *Responding Well to Victims and Survivors Guidance* must be followed. The Safeguarding Officer should explain the limitations to the complainant in an honest and empathetic manner.

The respondent

Requirements:

4D.2 When managing a safeguarding allegation involving a deceased respondent, the Safeguarding Officer and other relevant persons involved in the management of the allegation must, at all times, remain alert to:

- the fact that the respondent cannot provide a counter view to the allegation;

- the impact that the allegation might have on the relatives of the deceased person;
- what information is shared, how and with whom, including the impact that the information might have on how a person is remembered and their legacy;
- the fact that, in some instances, there may not be any remaining records or evidence relating to the allegation; and
- the role of the Safeguarding Officer is risk assessment and management, not investigation.

Guidance

4D.2 - Taking a balanced approach

The Safeguarding Officer may be able to determine, from records and information from statutory services and third parties, that the respondent has already faced trial and been convicted. If the Safeguarding Officer is able to ascertain those facts with clarity and in relation to the safeguarding allegation that is being raised, then their approach to managing the case will be influenced by this information. The role of the Safeguarding Officer is to assess and manage safeguarding risks – not to determine whether the allegation is true or false.

Engagement with the deceased respondent's relatives

In managing a safeguarding allegation involving a deceased respondent, the Safeguarding Officer should always have consideration to the impact that the allegation might have on a deceased respondent's family members. Many of them will not know that a safeguarding allegation has been raised and, in most instances, it would not be appropriate for the Safeguarding Officer to engage with them. It is only appropriate in circumstances where the Safeguarding Officer has reasonable grounds to believe that the allegation might be properly made.

In some cases, family members of the deceased person may find out if the complainant makes the allegation public, or if the complainant brings a civil claim against the Church and there is a need to engage with those family members to collate evidence. In such cases, the Safeguarding Officer should seek to engage with them and explain the actions that the Church is undertaking to manage the safeguarding allegation. The Safeguarding Officer should also discuss support needs, to determine if any support could be put in place for the deceased respondent's family or if they could be referred on to other support services. Providing the

family with information about the various processes that may apply, and the extent of those processes, may also be beneficial.

Information-sharing and media handling

The name of the deceased person against whom an allegation is brought, as well as the details of the allegation, should not be shared with anyone who sits outside of the risk assessment and management processes. Information should be shared in line with data protection legislation and advice should be sought from the relevant Diocesan Registrar or data protection lead.

The name of the respondent and details of the allegation should not appear in any public communications. This is particularly relevant for those circumstances in which a safeguarding concern or allegation was not proven in a court whilst the respondent was alive. Where a respondent has been convicted in the past for the specific safeguarding allegation that is being reported, information may have already been shared publicly at the time of the conviction.

Information, including the name of the deceased respondent, may become public through other means, including if the complainant or others involved in managing the allegation disclose that information on social media or to journalists. Allegations of non-recent abuse can be high-profile and attract significant media attention, especially when they involve multiple complainants, respondents or Church Bodies. In such cases, Safeguarding Officers should work closely with the relevant Directors of Communications and others to ensure that an appropriate communications strategy is put in place. Where a safeguarding concern or allegation has not been proven in a court, this strategy should balance the need to respond to any information that has been put in the public domain with the need to respect a deceased person's memory and legacy. Any communications released should account for:

- the principle that a person is innocent until proven guilty;
- the fact that the respondent cannot provide a response to the safeguarding allegation;
- the need for each decision on what to release in the public domain to be informed by the specific circumstances of each case; and
- the need to avoid stating or implying that a respondent is guilty.

As above, the impact on the deceased respondent's family and close friends should also be taken into account. Alongside this, the impact of any communications on other potential victims or survivors, linked to the deceased person or not, should also be considered. Any communications should include the contact details of the Safeguarding Officer and information about support services.

Information gathering and identification of risk

Requirements:

4D.3 Where a posthumous safeguarding concern or allegation is raised against a former Church Officer, the Safeguarding Officer must gather any relevant information and establish if there are any remaining risks associated with the situation.

4D.4 Any information gathered, and risk assessment carried out must be restricted to meeting the following aims:

- determining whether an individual was a Church Officer and if they have passed away;
- determining if safeguarding, statutory or disciplinary actions were previously taken against the respondent and, where possible, what the outcomes of those actions were;
- assessing any remaining safeguarding risks arising from any links that the respondent might have had with others who are alive and continue to serve as Church Officers, and whether further action need to be taken against them;
- assessing any safeguarding risks linked to the complainant and any other potential victims or survivors;
- assessing any safeguarding risks linked to the family or close friends of the respondent, if they become aware of the safeguarding concern or allegation;
- whether an initial SCMG is required to deal with support for the complainant/deceased respondents' family and any required communications.

4D.5 Where information is identified that indicates other individuals who were linked to the respondent and who continue to be Church Officers may present safeguarding risks, those risks must be managed in line with this Code.

4D.6 Where a case involves multiple complainants, respondents or Church Bodies, or where a case presents specific complexities, the Safeguarding Officer must decide whether a Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG) needs to be established. Any SCMG established must run in line with the requirements outlined in Section 3 of this Code.

4D.7 After the closure of a case, the Safeguarding Officer and, where one has been established, the SCMG, must undertake a reflective practice exercise, and must consider if a recommendation to undertake a Safeguarding Practice Review should be made to the DSAP (or an equivalent committee).

Guidance

4D.3 - 4D.4 - Information gathering

Establishing that the respondent is deceased

There will be circumstances in which a Safeguarding Officer receives information about an allegation involving a Church Officer, but the information received does not indicate if the subject of the allegation is deceased. Whether or not a person is alive is a key consideration for determining any ongoing safeguarding risks. For instance, if an allegation regarding a member of clergy's alleged inappropriate behaviour towards a child is raised and they are deceased, any ongoing safeguarding risk and intervention may be very limited. However, if the same allegation is made about a member of clergy who has left the respective Church Body but continues to practice in a different diocese, then the level of safeguarding risk will be higher and different actions would need to be undertaken. The Safeguarding Officer may need to conduct initial searches or enquiries to determine if the person was a Church Officer, if they continue to be a Church Officer or if they are deceased. This includes:

- considering when the events are alleged to have taken place;
- searching the National Clergy Register,
- searching the Crockford's Clerical Directory;
- checking any relevant clergy personnel records, HR records or pensions/housing information;
- accessing death records and archives that are public.

Obtaining relevant evidence

In gathering information to enable them to consider the issues listed above, Safeguarding Officers should make it clear to complainants and other relevant parties that the information is not being gathered as part of an investigation, but to ensure that any remaining risks are correctly mitigated.

Generally, in cases of non-recent abuse, the extent of any information gathering and risk assessment carried out by the Safeguarding Officer will be limited, unless they are asked to support the gathering of information that is relevant to a police investigation or a civil claim dispute.

In gathering information for the purposes of establishing risk, the Safeguarding Officer should prioritise accessing and checking records, if still available. This may include contacting other Safeguarding Officers to check if relevant information is held in other dioceses. Relevant records may include:

- clergy personnel records;
- HR records;
- safeguarding records;
- parish records;
- any archived records about disciplinary and criminal justice processes outcomes.

It is important to note that in many instances, local retention policies might mean that these records either do not exist anymore, or a data minimisation exercise was carried out, so only a limited amount of information may be available. It is also important to note that historically, data recording and retention arrangements might not have been as robust, there may be difficulties and delays in obtaining any records that might have been kept at the time, and the quality of those records may not meet today's standards. It is good practice for the Safeguarding Officer to record in the case files what material has been unobtainable.

Where possible, Safeguarding Officers should avoid carrying out interviews and it may be disproportionate for them to share information about the allegation with those not involved, except in cases where there is information that indicates other Church Officers may pose a risk of significant harm to a child, young person or vulnerable adult. In such cases, the Safeguarding Officer would need to follow the appropriate pathway in this Code. It may also be appropriate to use interviews when engaging with complainants or the families of deceased respondents, particularly when assessing any safeguarding risks to their wellbeing. Any information shared needs to be necessary, accurate and proportionate, with a clear rationale and aim, and should meet the requirements under data protection legislation.

If abuse took place, Church Bodies should reflect on their safeguarding arrangements and understand where such arrangements have potentially gone wrong. Learning lessons from such incidents and addressing any identified weakness or gaps is an important aspect of the management of recent and non-recent concerns.

There are limited circumstances where this would require a formal Safeguarding Practice Review, but this is generally unlikely. However, the reflective exercises required by that Code of Practice, and this one, may be used to identify particular areas of improvement, and should always be undertaken if a SCMG is convened.

4D.5 – 4D.7 - Risk assessment and management

Establishing if there are any associated risks with a particular situation is not about the risk associated with the deceased person, but any resulting risks that remain. These might be:

- if the allegation is that a crime might have been committed (even if the crime is alleged to have happened many years ago) or that a child, young person or vulnerable adult might be at risk of harm, then relevant statutory services need to be informed;
- if the deceased person might have had connections with other individuals who continue to be connected to the Church Body and may pose a risk to vulnerable individuals (for instance, if there is the possibility that a different Church Officer or a group of Church Officers covered up or failed to act to stop abuse from taking place);
- safeguarding risks may be identified in relation to the complainant and the respondent's family;
- other potential victims who may come forward as a result of publicity might be part of the respective Church community or Church Body, and may require support;
- if the processes put in place to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults have failed, their effectiveness will need to be reviewed and improved.

Section 4E: Managing safeguarding concerns and allegations[15] about employees

This is a specific pathway only for Church Officers who are employed.

Introduction

Section 1: Triage and Referrals
Section 2: Initial Contact
Section 3: Safeguarding Case Management Group

Section 4E: Managing safeguarding concerns and allegations about employees
Introduction
4E.1 – 4E.2 Managing allegations against employees

Section 5: Risk Assessment
Section 6: Outcomes, Closure and Long-term risk management

This pathway sets out the steps, requirements and guidance when responding to safeguarding allegations about an employee. For the purposes of this Code, an employee is someone who has entered into or works under (or has previously, worked under) a contract of employment with a Church Body.

This pathway covers both:

- situations where the allegation is that of direct abuse i.e. the employee is alleged to have engaged in actions or behaviours that have harmed, are likely to have harmed, or could lead to harm to, one or more individuals; and
- situations in which the allegation is that an employee, who is a "relevant person" under the Safeguarding (Code of Practice) Measure 2021, has not followed the Safeguarding Code of Practice and / or the House of Bishops' safeguarding guidance.

Where an employee is also a member of clergy, see Section 4A, which sets out how to decide whether this pathway or the clergy pathway applies.

[15] The requirements and guidance in this Code refer both to **safeguarding concerns** and to **safeguarding allegations**. However, for ease of reading, the term allegations is used throughout, and must be taken to include safeguarding concerns

The processes outlined in this Section should be followed in conjunction with any relevant Human Resources (HR) policies and procedures.

4E.1: Process for managing allegations regarding employees

Requirements:

4E.1 Church Bodies must follow their HR policies and procedures when responding to, assessing, and managing safeguarding allegations against employees.

4E.2 In applying the HR policies and procedures, the HR Lead (i.e. the person or department responsible for HR/employment matters) must work closely with the Safeguarding Officer or the NST. The HR Lead and the Safeguarding Officer must ensure that:

- there is a clear assessment made by the Safeguarding Officer as to whether it is a safeguarding allegation;
- risks arising from specific situations or types of abuse are considered, and appropriate measures are put in place to mitigate them;
- reporting requirements to statutory bodies are met;
- appropriate support is put in place for the complainant;
- appropriate support is put in place for the respondent;
- good quality records on how the allegation is handled are kept;
- where the matter might need to be referred to insurers, advice is sought from the relevant Registrar or the Legal Office;
- there is an assessment whether the matter constitutes a Serious Incident and needs to be reported to the Charity Commission; and
- for employees engaging in regulated activity, a decision is made whether to refer the individual to the DBS for barring;

Guidance

4E.1 - 4E.2 - Managing allegations against employees

Responding to safeguarding concerns or allegations about matters outside of the employment relationship

Matters in an employee's personal life, which may have safeguarding implications for a Church Body, may be brought to the attention of a Safeguarding Officer or HR Lead through various means, which may include a formal request for suspension from a LADO. These may be investigated, but only acted upon in circumstances in which it is clear that they have a bearing on the employment relationship and their role within the Church Body. Conduct outside of work, which is not linked to, and has no bearing on, the employment relationship is unlikely to justify any disciplinary or similar HR action. The HR Lead must give consideration as to whether the employee's line manager should be made aware of the matter and must document the outcome and rationale for that decision.

It is good practice for employers to outline any reasonable expectations of their employees' conduct outside of work (e.g. acceptable use of work equipment, social media use) in their HR policies, so that employees are clear about what is and what is not acceptable. Including examples of behaviours which might constitute misconduct or gross misconduct is also a helpful way of ensuring that expectations are made clear from the outset.

For misconduct that takes place, or is alleged to have taken place, outside the workplace, Church Bodies may not be able to fully assess the matters at hand and, therefore it is important to clearly focus on any overlap between the employment and the alleged misconduct. The way in which the alleged misconduct outside of work impacts employment with the Church Body should be made clear to the employee from the start. In cases in which a police investigation is underway, the employer does not need to wait for the outcome of the investigation or prosecution before taking fair and reasonable action. As with misconduct at work, any disciplinary action taken in response to conduct outside of work must be justified, reasonable, proportional, follow a fair process and respect an individual's rights under employment law.

Responding to concerns where there are multiple employment contracts

The same principles as set out in Section 4E.2 would also apply to situations where an employee holds employment contracts with different Church Bodies. If one body receives a concern and is aware that the employee is involved in similar work elsewhere, they will need to decide, based on the specifics of the case, at what point (if any) they need to inform the other Church Body. If the contract is for a completely different role and there is no risk

identified, Church Bodies would need to take advice and justify why if they felt it was necessary and proportionate to share information with another employer in those circumstances.

Responding to safeguarding concerns and allegations involving non-recent abuse or misconduct

For guidance on managing safeguarding allegations involving deceased respondents, please refer to the relevant Pathway within this Code. In cases where the respondent is now only a member of clergy and is no longer an employee in any capacity within the Church, even if they were an employee at the time of the incident, please refer to the clergy pathway.

If a safeguarding allegation is raised about a current employee of a Church Body and it is about non-recent abuse or misconduct, due process needs to be followed to investigate the allegation raised, as outlined in the relevant HR policies and procedures. If the safeguarding concern or allegation refers to aspects of an employee's personal life, including aspects linked to their past employment outside of the respective Church Body, the guidance in this section applies.

If the allegation is non-recent abuse or misconduct linked to that person's employment, but the person is no longer an employee or resigns during the process, then HR Leads, line managers and Safeguarding Officers still have a responsibility to respond. A limited process is still required in order to:

- provide a response to the complainant;
- gather information, assess and manage any ongoing risk, including deciding whether information needs to be shared and with whom;
- make any necessary referrals to the Charity Commission, LADO or DBS and;
- gather any learning so that any similar situations can be avoided in the future.

Assessing and managing any ongoing risk

Even though a respondent has left their role in a Church Body, from a safeguarding perspective the following considerations need to be taken into account:

- if the allegation is that a crime might have been committed or that a child, young person or vulnerable adult has been, or might be at risk of being, harmed, then relevant statutory services might need to be informed;
- the respondent may have moved on to a role that involves contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults (inside or outside of the Church);

- other potential victims might be part of the respective Church community, Church Body or TEI, and may require support;
- depending on the nature of the allegation, the respondent might have had connections with other individuals who may continue to be connected to the Church Body or TEI and may pose a risk to vulnerable individuals (for instance, if there is the possibility that a different employee or a group of employees covered up or failed to act to stop abuse from taking place);
- depending on the nature of the allegation, if the processes put in place to safeguard children, young people and adults are alleged to have failed, their effectiveness needs to be reviewed and improved.

Whilst HR, the line manager and the Safeguarding Officer would not be in a position to conduct a full investigation or case assessment, they may:

- check the relevant safeguarding, HR and other records and files;
- speak to other employees or individuals connected to the Church, who might have witnessed the alleged events or misconduct;
- consider if any information is held with regard to the employee's subsequent employment or other roles.

If information is held or becomes available about a former employee's current employment, then the need to share information about the allegation with the new employer should be considered. This will generally be done only in very limited circumstances. The key questions that should be asked in this case are:

- Are statutory services involved? Have they been informed? If yes, follow their advice.
- Has the Diocesan Registrar or the relevant legal advisor provided advice on whether the information about the allegation should be shared? If not, ask for their advice.
- What is the nature of the allegation? Based on the records and information gathered, should the allegation be true, would there be a continued risk of harm to children, young people and vulnerable adults?
- Does the individual's new role involve work with children, young people and vulnerable adults?
- Would children, young people and vulnerable adults potentially be at risk if information is not shared?

Any information shared with a different employer needs to be necessary, accurate and proportionate, with a clear rationale and aim, and should meet the requirements under data protection legislation.

It is not advised that a Safeguarding Officer, HR lead or a line manager undertake efforts to contact other potential victims or survivors, unless specifically requested to do so by the police. Attempting to directly contact other victims and survivors can lead to them being re-traumatised.

Managing safeguarding risks

Safeguarding Officers can support HR Leads and line managers to assess any risks, that may arise from allegations.

The actions that can be undertaken to manage risks (both on the initial receipt of the allegations and in the longer term) should be specified in the relevant HR policies and should be in alignment with employment law. Depending on the policy, these actions may include suspension on pay or re-arrangement of work responsibilities e.g. the employee ceasing to undertake certain duties or ceasing to have contact with certain people.

It is important to note that assessing risk is not a one-off action, but a process – a professional's understanding and assessment of risk in a particular situation can evolve over time, as a case progresses, and further information becomes available. This means that HR, line managers and Safeguarding Officers will need to maintain an open dialogue about the nature of any risks involved and any actions or measures needed to manage them.

For clarity, there is no expectation that a Safeguarding Case Management Group will be convened to manage risk in cases involving employees. Instead, the relevant HR policy or procedure should be followed, and it may be that the policy already utilises the use of a similar style of group in order to manage the risks.

Support to the complainant and the employee

Support to the complainant must be offered in line with the requirements and guidance set out in the "Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse" guidance. This will generally be coordinated through the Safeguarding Officer.

Support for the employee should be specified in the relevant HR policy and should reflect an employee's rights under employment law e.g. the right to be accompanied in disciplinary hearings by a colleague or a trade union representative.

Record-keeping

HR Leads and line managers should ensure that all the key information regarding a case is recorded on their own Case Management system. This includes timelines, details of any meetings held, any outcomes / decisions (including the rationale) and information about any referrals made. Church Bodies will have different arrangements for the recording and storage of HR information, including details on the systems HR might need to use to record that information. Guidance on records management is available on the Church of England website, which includes specific guidance on the management of safeguarding records.

Church Bodies will need to make it clear to employees what data will be processed and why, and where and for how long that data will be stored. Church Bodies can include this information in a Privacy Notice.

Safeguarding Officers should maintain records of the following:

- That a matter has been assessed as a safeguarding matter needing input from a Safeguarding Officer or the NST;
- Information about referrals to statutory services – in situations where a decision was made not to make a referral, the rationale for this should be recorded;
- Information about the support offered to the complainant and the respondent;
- Any advice on risk management that was provided to HR or the line manager;
- The key outcomes that a HR process has achieved, where these outcomes are linked to the management of risk (e.g. suspension decisions).

Gathering relevant learning

If abuse took place, Church Bodies should reflect on their safeguarding arrangements and understand where such arrangements have potentially gone wrong. Learning lessons from such incidents and addressing any identified weakness or gaps in the effectiveness of relevant arrangements is an important aspect of the management of both recent and non-recent allegations.

This is a different process to that of conducting a formal, independent Safeguarding Practice Review. However, the reflective exercises and some of the principles outlined in the Safeguarding Practice Reviews Code of Practice can help HR, line managers and Safeguarding Officers to reflect on relevant lessons to be learnt.

Risk Assessment – please refer to Section 5

Outcomes, Closure and Long-term risk – please refer to Section 6

Section 4F: Failure to Follow Safeguarding Requirements

This pathway only applies to "relevant persons (including clergy)" as defined in section 5A of the Safeguarding Clergy and Discipline Measure 2016.

Section 1: Triage and Referrals

Section 2: Initial Contact

Section 3: Safeguarding Case Management Group

Section 4F: Failure to Follow Safeguarding Requirements

4F.1 – 4F.5 Initial Enquiries

4F.6 – 4F.10 The Initial Safeguarding Code of Practice Meeting

4F.11 – 4F.15 Further Code of Practice Meeting

4F.16 – 4F.20 Safeguarding Development Plan

4F.21 - 4F.22 Closure and Record-keeping

Section 5: Risk Assessment

Section 6: Outcomes, Closure and Long-term risk management

Introduction

This pathway only applies to "relevant persons" as defined in section 5A of the Safeguarding Clergy and Discipline Measure 2016. Any reference to "safeguarding requirements" in this Code means the requirements (those in the blue boxes) included in the Safeguarding Codes of Practice.

Getting safeguarding right is part of a developmental journey and, despite the best intentions, individuals will make mistakes. This is why the initial approach to allegations regarding a failure to meet safeguarding requirements should be focused on competence and capability, rather than punishment. This pathway also offers a proportionate response where there is no actual complainant.

Everyone must be able to recognise when they make mistakes and be ready to learn from, and where possible, remedy them. Positive engagement with the process and signs of self-

reflexivity are usually indications of a lower degree of risk and merit a proportionate approach. However, if a respondent does not positively engage with the process or if the result of a failure to meet safeguarding requirements is such that the impact on someone's life is significant, then a competence or capability process is unlikely to be appropriate and the relevant Pathway under this Code must be followed. This is a decision for the Safeguarding Officer and others involved in overseeing the development of a respondent.

This section introduces a new pathway which can more appropriately deal with a "failure to follow a safeguarding requirement", as long as this has not resulted in any direct harm. For example, this may be when someone has not carried out all the Safer Recruitment checks on a new appointment or has not appropriately convened a SCMG.

This pathway applies to anyone who is a relevant person and who demonstrates a genuine desire to learn from any mistakes made and avoid them in the future. Escalation routes for more serious "failure to follow" cases which have resulted in direct harm, and in cases in which a respondent is not engaging with the process or continues to fail to meet requirements, are included.

Requirements:

Initial enquiries

4F.1 Where the Safeguarding Officer receives a safeguarding concern or allegation that a "relevant person" has failed to meet safeguarding requirements, the Safeguarding Officer must inform the relevant manager or person who maintains oversight of that person's activity in the Church.

4F.2 Where this relates to an employee, they must refer the matter to the HR lead and the relevant HR policies must be followed.

4F.3 Where the person is a member of clergy but not a Bishop or Archbishop, the Safeguarding Officer must inform the Archdeacon, Bishop, Dean or other relevant senior person in the first instance. If the matter relates to a Bishop or Archbishop, this must be referred to the NST, and references to the Safeguarding Officer will then apply to the NST caseworker.

4F.4 Where the subject is the Safeguarding Officer themselves, the matter will be dealt with by their line manager and the Regional Safeguarding Lead. References to the Safeguarding Officer will then apply to the Regional Safeguarding Lead.

4F.5 Where 4F.2, 4F.3 or 4F.4 applies, the Safeguarding Officer must carry out initial enquiries to gather more information about the allegation and must initiate a Safeguarding Code of Practice meeting.

The initial Safeguarding code of Practice meeting

4F.6 The timing of the initial Safeguarding Code of Practice meeting must be decided by the Safeguarding Officer and must be informed by the circumstances of the case.

4F.7 The Safeguarding Officer must decide who should attend the Safeguarding Code of Practice meeting. As a minimum, the Safeguarding Officer and the line manager, person who maintains oversight of that Officer's activity in the Church or Archdeacon (or other senior clergy) must attend.

4F.8 Each Safeguarding Code of Practice meeting must start with a consideration of any conflicts of interest.

4F.9 Decisions in the Safeguarding Code of Practice meeting must be made by agreement, provided that the Safeguarding Officer is part of that agreement.

4F.10 If the members attending the Safeguarding Code of Practice meeting, having considered the information and evidence gathered by the Safeguarding Officer, are satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the safeguarding requirements raised in the allegation have been met, then the case must be closed.

4F.11 If the information and evidence gathered by the Safeguarding Officer up to this point indicates that a requirement has not been met, the attendees of the Safeguarding Code of Practice meeting must agree the scope of the information the Safeguarding Officer must collect, in order for the group to make a decision.

4F.12 The Safeguarding Officer (or line manager or senior clergy where this would be more appropriate) must then formally speak with the respondent and record their responses.

4F.13 Once the Safeguarding Officer has met with the Respondent, a second Safeguarding Code of Practice meeting must take place to decide:

- Whether there is sufficient evidence to close the case
- Whether the matter is serious enough to be dealt with by a SCMG process
- Whether the matter can be dealt with by a Learning and Development Plan

4F.14 Factors that indicate the matter must be managed by the Safeguarding Officer as a safeguarding learning and development issue are that:

- The respondent recognises that they have made an error or have misjudged a situation, and conveys a sense of regret and sorrow;
- the respondent understands and can explain the impact of what they have done on others;
- the respondent is keen to develop and strengthen their safeguarding competence;

- the respondent will accept the support offered;
- the respondent is willing to apologise directly to those who have been adversely affected;
- there is evidence that the respondent has previously taken safeguarding matters seriously and promoted good safeguarding practice; and / or
  there is evidence that there are factors in the respondent's organisational systems / contexts which adversely impacted on their actions / decisions

4F.15 Indicators that the matter must be managed under Section 3 – The role of Safeguarding Case Management Groups and the Section 4A B, or G Pathways are that:

- the actions allegedly taken or not taken by the respondent are very serious in terms of their actual or potential impact on others;
- the respondent does not recognise that they have done anything wrong;
- the respondent does not recognise that their actions have had an adverse impact on others;
- the respondent maintains that they are in the right and cannot evidence any self-reflexivity on the matter;
- the respondent does not believe they need any developmental support with their safeguarding practice;
- there is a history of the respondent not taking safeguarding matters seriously;
- the respondent has refused to engage with the process so far.

4F.16 If a decision is made that the matter should be dealt with as a learning and development issue, then a Safeguarding Development Plan must be put in place.

<u>The Safeguarding Development Plan</u>

4F.17 The Safeguarding Development Plan must be developed and agreed by the attendees of the Safeguarding Development meeting, and must be signed by the respondent.

4F.18 The Safeguarding Development Plan must be proportionate, so may be brief, but must specify clearly:

- the rationale for the proposed additional learning, development and support;
- the expectations from the respondent;
- the expected outcomes and how these will be reviewed / measured; and
- how the Plan will be monitored and by whom, including agreed review points and when the Plan is due to be closed.

4F.19 Before closing a Safeguarding Development Plan, the Safeguarding Officer must organise a reflective session with the respondent, to assess if all the requirements and expected outcomes in the Plan were met. The outcomes of the reflective session must be discussed with the attendees of the Safeguarding Development meeting.

4F.20 If a respondent fails to sign or engage with the Safeguarding Development Plan, or if the requirements and expected outcomes of the Plan have not been met, the attendees of the Safeguarding Development meeting must trigger the processes under Section 3 - The role of the Safeguarding Case Management Groups and the Section 4A, 4B or 4G Pathways under this Code.

Closure

4F.21 The Safeguarding Officer must inform the complainant (where there is one) and the respondent in writing about the outcomes and closure of a case.

4F.22 The Safeguarding Officer must make and maintain a clear record of the allegation, how it was managed and the outcomes of the safeguarding management process.

Guidance

4F.1 - 4F.5 - Initial enquiries

The aim of this pathway is to provide an option for mistakes to be rectified without having to go through, at least in the first instance, the full pathway appropriate to the role. Therefore, initial enquiries need to focus on:

- Is the person a "relevant person"?
- Have they failed to follow (for whatever reason) any Safeguarding Code of Practice?[16]
- Is this a procedural breach that has not resulted in direct harm?

If the answer to these questions is "yes", this pathway should be followed. If the answer to the last question is "no", then the role appropriate pathway (4A, B or G) in this Code must be followed.

4F.6 - 4F.10 - The Initial Safeguarding Code of Practice Meeting

The purpose of the initial Safeguarding Code of Practice Meeting is to:

- consider any information and evidence gathered to this point by the Safeguarding Officer;
- determine if any further information or evidence needs to be obtained; or whether
- the matter must be closed or managed under the processes set out in Section 3, Through the Safeguarding Case Management Groups and the Section 4 pathways.

4F.11 - 4F.15 – Further Code of Practice meeting

Unless the matter is considered closed or to be dealt with under the SCMG process, the Safeguarding Officer needs to discuss the concerns raised with the respondent, outlining:

- the nature of the allegation;
- any relevant facts;

[16] Safeguarding Code of Practice is available on the Safeguarding e-manual,

- the opportunity for the respondent to present their perspective.

Once this meeting has taken place, a second meeting is called to review the facts gathered by the Safeguarding Officer and determine the best outcome for the particular circumstances.

4F.16 - 4F.20 - Safeguarding Development Plan

A Safeguarding Development Plan can include training, mentoring, coaching, reflective sessions and any other support that will help the respondent:

- reflect on and correct any mistakes, and
- improve their safeguarding knowledge and competency.

The attendees of the Safeguarding Development meeting must ensure that there is a clear rationale for how the additional learning, development and support will contribute to these aims. The exact requirements or arrangements put in place will depend on the nature of the concern or allegation.

The Plan should include a defined timeframe within which the respondent is expected to meet any Requirements. Clear review points and monitoring arrangements should also be built into the Plan, to ensure that the respondent receives support and is making progress towards improving their practice. These arrangements may involve the Safeguarding Officer or any of the other attendees of the Safeguarding Development meeting, as well as any other relevant Church Officers who may need to play a role (provided that this is discussed and agreed with them).

In cases where a Safeguarding Officer has failed to comply with a requirement, this Plan should be set out by their line manager in consultation with the Regional Safeguarding Lead.

4F.21 – 4F.22 - Closure and Record-keeping

The key aim of this pathway is to allow reflection and improve practice, and the Plan when developed should clearly state how these outcomes will be evidenced, and the final outcome should be recorded.

If they are not, or if the respondent fails to engage, or disengages with the process, then the other pathways in this Code need to be followed. It needs to be recorded that attempts were made to follow this pathway but were unsuccessful.

Safeguarding Officers should ensure that all the key information regarding a case is appropriately recorded. This should include information about referrals, meetings that were held, decisions and outcomes, including the rationale for all of these. Where the respondent is an employee, information must also be included within the respondent's HR file.

Section 4G: Managing concerns or allegations against Elected Members

Section 1: Triage and Referrals
Section 2: Initial Contact
Section 3: Safeguarding Case Management Group

Section 4G: Elected Members

Introduction and Definitions
4G.1 – 4G.2 Initial response and convening a SCMG
4G.3 – 4G.9 The initial case summary and the role of the SCMG
4G.10 – 4G.14 Safeguarding enquiries

Section 5: Risk Assessment
Section 6: Outcomes, Closure and Long-term risk management

Introduction and definitions

This section sets out the steps, requirements and guidance to be followed in response to safeguarding concerns and allegations where:

- it covers a recent or non-recent concern or allegation; and
- the respondent is alive;
- the respondent is a lay person;
- the respondent has been elected to a post or office

As outlined in Section 4F of this Code, concerns of failure to follow safeguarding requirements may be managed under this pathway, but only in cases in which the circumstances in that section are met. A separate pathway for the management of posthumous safeguarding allegations is included in Section 4D.

Structure

This Section is structured into a series of steps that need to be followed when managing allegations involving elected members. Some steps and requirements may need to be followed in a different order to that presented in this Section, to reflect the specific circumstances of each case. This should only be done on the advice of statutory services or a Regional Safeguarding Lead (on behalf of the NST).

Definitions

For the purposes of this section, an "elected representative" is any person who has been elected to a trustee role in the Church. This includes, but is not limited to:

- members of Parish Church Councils (PCC)[17], including specific officeholders such churchwardens
- members of Cathedral Chapters

It is important to note that parish clergy are ex-officio members of their PCCs[18] and Cathedral Chapters[19] will also include members of clergy. Where this applies, the clergy pathway (Section 4A) will take precedence, but there may be considerations included in this current pathway that are relevant – for instance, responsibilities deriving from charity law and those dimensions linked to an individual's role as a trustee. Similarly, readers and lay workers may be part of a PCC, but any allegations or concerns raised about them should be managed as a volunteer with a cross-check to this section to ensure that any responsibilities deriving from charity law and that person's role as a trustee have been considered.

In rare circumstances, Church Bodies may have employed trustees. In those cases, this guidance must be followed in conjunction with the employees' pathway (Section 4E) within this Code.

Where a person is elected to deanery, diocesan, or the General Synod, they usually discharge such responsibilities secondary to a role that they already hold in a parish. This Code does not apply to them in their role as members elected to a synod. For example, if an allegation is brought against a member of clergy who is also a member of the General Synod's House of Clergy, the "clergy pathway" within this Code would be followed.

[17] The reference to PCC here includes Guild Church Councils and District Church Councils or other similar body
[18] see Church Representation Rules, section M15
[19] see Cathedrals Measure 2021, Schedule 1, section 1

Expectations regarding the conduct of elected representatives

As trustees of a charity, elected representatives have specific responsibilities under charity law and should follow the Charity Commission's safeguarding guidance.[20] Specifically, elected representatives play a key role in protecting their staff, volunteers and the beneficiaries of their charity, and in managing any safeguarding risks that arise in relation to any of these groups. As such, any safeguarding concerns or allegations raised about an elected representative represents a serious concern in terms of specific behaviour, and in the governance of a Church Body. As senior Church Officers, elected representatives who become respondents to safeguarding concerns or allegations should ensure that they productively engage with safeguarding processes, recognising that a failure to do so could significantly impact the trust that beneficiaries, donors, volunteers and others put in that Church Body, its governance and mission. In addition, elected representatives will have specific responsibilities that arise from canon and ecclesiastical law.

Disqualifications and vacation of office

Under the Charities Act 2011, a person is disqualified from being a charity trustee under a number of different circumstances, including:

- if they have been convicted of a terrorism, money laundering, misconduct in public office, perjury or perverting the course of justice offence, or any other offence involving dishonesty or deception; and
- if they have been removed, in the past, from an officer, employee or trustee role in a charity by an order from the Charity Commission or the High Court, on the grounds of misconduct.

Under the Church Representation Rules, Rule 68 states that a person is disqualified from holding a role in a PCC if they:

- are included in a barred list; or
- have been convicted of an offence mentioned in Schedule 1 to the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (namely, a violent or sexual offence against a child).

[20] Under section 17 of the Charities Act 2011, the trustees of a charity have a duty to have due regard to the Charity Commission guidance. More generic Charity Commission guidance on a trustee's duties can be found here.

The same disqualifications apply to members of Cathedral Chapters. These are outlined in section 36 of the Cathedrals Measure 2021.

In rare circumstances, the bishop of a diocese can waive these disqualifications, but they must consult the Safeguarding Officer before deciding to do so. The advice of the Safeguarding Officer must be recorded, along with the bishop's ultimate decision. If the bishop goes against the advice of the Safeguarding Officer, the Safeguarding Officer must raise this with the NST.

It is also important to note that there are a range of other disqualifications that apply to PCC members, which are captured under the Church Representation Rules and the Churchwardens Measure 2001.

If a person is found to meet the above disqualifications when they apply or they are nominated or elected for a role, they must not be allowed to continue the process or to take up the role. If a person is found to meet any of the above disqualifications whilst in role, they must be asked to vacate the role with immediate effect.

Initial response and convening a Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG)

Requirements:

Convening a Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG)

4G.1 When managing an allegation about an elected member, the Safeguarding Officer must convene an SCMG, by following the requirements in Section 3.

4G.2 The Safeguarding Officer must explore what information is held in respect of the respondent and, if that information could be relevant to a police or social services investigation, they must share it with the relevant authorities.

Guidance

4G.1 - 4G.2 - Initial response considerations

Where a safeguarding allegation is made against an elected member, but it relates to matters an elected member's personal life, the Safeguarding Officer must exercise their professional judgement when determining whether to act on that information. This involves an assessment of whether the information received has any bearing on the elected member's role in the Church, particularly any work with children, young people or vulnerable adults. Where the Safeguarding Officer decides to initiate relevant safeguarding processes, a clear rationale must be recorded in the case notes, which should detail which aspects of that information are relevant for safeguarding purposes, how and why they are relevant.

When assessing a case where the information available refers to an elected member's personal life, the Safeguarding Officer should work closely with any statutory services involved and take their advice. The Safeguarding Officer's assessment of the case should be proportionate and should not lead to an unnecessary and intrusive collection of information about someone's personal life. For every question asked and action undertaken as part of the assessment, there should be a clear rationale and a link back to an aspect of the respondent's work within the Church.

The above advice also applies to situations in which an allegation is made about someone in an elected member's close family. Generally, these situations will not trigger a safeguarding

process under this Code, unless there is a rationale to argue that the elected member has displayed concerning behaviours in how they dealt with that matter (e.g. where they actively covered up abuse inflicted by a member of their family, or where they appear to believe that abuse inflicted by a member of their family is acceptable). This does not apply to situations in which the family member is directly involved in the life the Church, as an employee, volunteer or otherwise, in which case they are a Church Officer, and this Code will apply to them and the relevant process outlined in this Code will be followed.

Responding to safeguarding allegations involving non-recent events, where the respondent has left the Church Body

Complainants who come forward to disclose non-recent abuse will have varied reasons for doing so: it might have taken them a long time to look at the events that they have experienced and see them as abuse, they might have felt scared to disclose whilst the respondent was still in active ministry, they may express a need or desire to achieve closure on past traumatic experiences, and / or they may wish to prevent others from becoming victims of abuse.

Regardless of when the events disclosed are alleged to have taken place, complainants should be taken seriously, and their disclosures should not be ignored. A trauma-informed approach must be applied, and support must be offered in line with the Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse guidance. Specific care should be given to the fact that the complainant might feel a sense of disappointment and / or frustration in situations in which limited action can be undertaken regarding the respondent (e.g. when a disciplinary process cannot be followed). Being open and clear about what processes can and cannot be followed from the start will help manage the complainant's expectations.

Assessing and managing any ongoing risk

Where an allegation refers to non-recent events and the subject of the allegation is alive, a Safeguarding Officer may be faced with different scenarios, including if the elected member continues to be actively involved in ministry or hold any official role in the Church of England, but has moved to a different diocese or Church Body, or when they have stepped down entirely from any formal roles, and are effectively a member of the congregation only.

There are specific considerations that a Safeguarding Officer would have to keep in mind when acting in each of these scenarios.

If an elected member has left the respective Church Body or diocese but continues to be actively involved in a different diocese or Church Body within the Church of England, then the Safeguarding Officer should share the allegation with the Safeguarding Officer in that diocese (in line with the Internal Information Sharing Plan) and agree how the allegation will be taken forward and by whom. The requirements, advice and procedures set out in this Code would then apply.

If the elected member has moved to a role outside of the Church, then from a safeguarding perspective the Safeguarding Officer, would need to consider the following:

- If the allegation is that a crime might have been committed or that a child, young person or vulnerable adult has been, or might be at risk of being, harmed, then the relevant statutory services would need to be informed. Some police forces have specific teams that deal with allegations of non-recent abuse, and Safeguarding Officers should ensure that they maintain up to date knowledge whether or not such a team is available within their local police force.

- There may be transferrable risks associated with the respondent, particularly in cases in which the respondent has moved, or may have moved, to a role that involves contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Close partnership working with statutory authorities is essential in these circumstances, as a Church Body may not always have information about a respondent's subsequent roles outside of the Church.

- Any risks associated with other potential victims being part of the respective Church community or Church Body and may require support.

- Depending on the nature of the allegation, the respondent might have had connections with other individuals who may continue to be connected to the Church and may pose a safeguarding risk, for instance there may be the possibility that a different Church Officer covered up or failed to act to prevent abuse.

- Depending on the nature of the allegation, if the processes put in place to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults have failed to do so, their effectiveness needs to be reviewed and improved.

In such circumstances, Church Bodies would still need to follow the requirements and processes outlined in this Code, but the extent of any safeguarding enquiries and risk assessment carried out may be limited and would need to be proportionate. Disciplinary

processes and procedures would only be applicable if the respondent has moved to a new role in a different diocese or other church body.

If information is held or becomes available about a respondent's current role, then the need to share information about the allegation / concern with the new employer or the new religious organisation / denomination should be considered. This will generally be done only in very limited circumstances, usually via the police, LADO or other relevant statutory authority. The key questions that should be asked in these cases are:

- Are statutory services involved? Have they been informed? If yes, follow their advice.
- Does the individual's new role involve work with children, young people and vulnerable adults?
- What is the nature of the allegation / concern? Based on the records and information gathered, if the concern / allegation is substantiated, is there a continued risk of harm to children, young people and vulnerable adults?
- Would children, young people and vulnerable adults potentially be at risk if information is not shared?
- Have the Diocesan Registrar / the relevant legal advisor and the relevant Data Protection Officer provided advice whether the information about the allegation / concern should be shared? If not, seek their advice.

Any information shared needs to be necessary, accurate and proportionate, with a clear rationale and aim, and should meet the requirements under data protection legislation. The Internal Information Sharing Plan covers information sharing with the Church in Wales but does not cover information sharing with other religious organisations or Christian denominations.

If they are now simply a member of the worshipping community, the Safeguarding Officer would need to determine firstly if the requirements are met for any referrals to statutory services, and whether a risk assessment is required. It may be that there is no action which can be taken in respect of the alleged respondent, however support must always be provided to the survivor.

If abuse took place, Church Bodies should reflect on their safeguarding arrangements and understand where such arrangements have potentially gone wrong and why. Organisational learning from such incidents and addressing any identified weaknesses or gaps, as well as any cultural factors, are important aspects of promoting safer practice and environments. Further guidance can be found in the Code of Practice on Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

The requirements and guidance in this pathway should be followed alongside those in Section 3.

Requirements:

The role of the SCMG

4G.3 Ahead of the initial SCMG meeting, the Safeguarding Officer must prepare an initial case summary.

4G.4 The Safeguarding Officer must assess any immediate safeguarding risks and decide if any mitigations need to be put in place in the short-term for example, an interim Church Safety Plan or suspension.

4G.5 The SCMG must consider the support that is, or should be, provided to the complainant, the respondent and their immediate families or dependants.

4G.6 The SCMG must consider the impact of the allegation, and any actions taken in response, on the wider Church community and put in place appropriate measures to address any negative impacts and mitigate risks.

4G.7 The Safeguarding Officer, in consultation with the SCMG, must decide what processes should be initiated.

4G.8 The Safeguarding Officer, in consultation with the SCMG, must decide the scope of any subsequent safeguarding enquiries.

4G.9 The Safeguarding Officer must compile the information gathered through any subsequent enquiries in a report, which must be presented to the SCMG.

Safeguarding enquiries

4G.10 The aims of any safeguarding enquiries are to:

- gather relevant information and establish facts; and
- identify any ongoing safeguarding risks.

4G.11 If interviews are carried out, the Safeguarding Officer must make a written record of each interview, share it with the relevant interviewee to confirm its accuracy, and save it in the case files.

4G.12 Based on the information gathered, the Safeguarding Officer, in consultation with the SCMG, must determine if, on the balance of probabilities there is sufficient evidence to substantiate the existence of an ongoing safeguarding risk. Where the determination is that there is not sufficient evidence, the matter is unsubstantiated.

4G.13 If the outcome is 'substantiated' the SCMG must follow the requirements in section 5 (Risk Assessment).

4G.14 If the outcome is 'unsubstantiated', the case must be closed at this stage and the SCMG must follow the requirements for closure in section 6 (Outcomes, closure and the long-term management of risk).

Guidance

4G.3 - The initial case summary and the role of the SCMG

Ahead of the initial meeting of an SCMG, a Safeguarding Officer should prepare an initial case summary, which outlines the information known at that stage and any processes already initiated or that need SCMG consideration. The purpose of the initial case summary is to provide the SCMG with the background information needed in order to advise and make decisions on next steps in the management of a case. Generally, an initial case summary will include the following:

- details of the initial allegation, including a summary of any information provided by the complainant and the respondent and any relevant information from existing records, e.g. past safeguarding concerns recorded on the NSCMS or in the clergy personnel records;
- input and plans from statutory services, or the rationale for not making a referral to statutory services;

- a dynamic assessment of risk, based on information known at that stage, and any proposed mitigations in the short-term i.e. Interim Church Safety Plan, voluntary step down from duties, suspension;
- consideration of other referrals that have been, or may need to be, made in line with the requirements in Section 1;
- details of any gaps in information that impede the effective assessment of the allegation and any safeguarding risks, as well as plans for how this information may be gathered;
- details of the support put in place for the complainant, the respondent and their immediate families / dependants, and any proposals for additional support that may be needed;
- if appropriate, proposals for the communications and support that may be needed for the Church community impacted by the allegation and any actions taken in response.

The focus of each SCMG meeting will differ with the ongoing management of the case. Decisions made during SCMG meetings should be regularly reviewed in light of new information becoming available, to ensure that they remain timely and relevant. A template for an Initial Case summary is available.

4G.4 - Managing Immediate Safeguarding Risks

Interim Church Safety Plan

An Interim Church Safety Plan is focused on the short-term management of risk – i.e. whilst safeguarding and other processes are ongoing. An Interim Church Safety Plan is not based on a formal or complete risk assessment, but a dynamic consideration of risk by the Safeguarding Officer and the SCMG, as relevant information is being gathered. Interim Church Safety Plans follow the same requirements as regular Church Safety Plans, as set out in Section 6 (Outcomes, closure and the long-term management of risk).

Interim Church Safety Plans need to be agreed and signed by the respondent. Any refusal to sign the Plan should be considered by the SCMG. In such cases, alternative ways to manage risk need to be identified.

Suspension

Under Rule 69 of the Church Representational Rules[21], an elected member can be suspended if:

- that person "is arrested on suspicion of committing an offence mentioned in Schedule 1 to the Children and Young Persons Act 1933";
- that person "is charged with an offence mentioned in that Schedule without being arrested"; or
- the bishop "is satisfied on the basis of information provided by a local authority or the police" that a person "presents a significant risk of harm".

A suspension will continue for 3 months from the point at which notice is given and may be extended by providing a further notice of suspension. It may be revoked earlier if the issue is concluded. In which case, the bishop has a duty to consult the Safeguarding Officer and other appropriate people. A person who receives a suspension notification under the circumstances explained above may appeal that decision to the President of the Tribunals.

There are a limited range of circumstances in which an elected member can be removed. These are set out in Rule 68 of the Church Representational Rules:

A person is disqualified from "being nominated, chosen or elected as, or from serving as, a member of a Parochial Church Council, a deanery synod, a diocesan synod or the General Synod" and "from being appointed to act as, or from acting as, secretary or treasurer of a Parochial Church Council", if:

- *they are included in a barred list;*
- *they are "convicted of an offence mentioned in Schedule 1 to the Children and Young Persons Act 1933".*

If the elected member is also a Trustee of a registered charity, there may also be grounds for their removal in line with Charity Commission guidance[22].

[21] It should be noted that this matter is currently under consideration by the Electoral Reform Committee, and any amendment to the Rules will require changes to this Code.
[22] For further information, see Charity trustees: resignation and removal - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) and seek appropriate legal advice.

4G.5 - Support

Support to victims and survivors of church-related abuse must be provided in line with the requirements in the Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse guidance.

The availability of a senior member of clergy to meet with concerned members of the Church can provide an important opportunity for those persons to express any concerns or feelings. Assistance in managing those feelings, worries, anxiety and any crisis in faith should be provided. Some parishioners may want to pray together, and consideration should be given to how this can be safely facilitated.

Stress may also be experienced by members of clergy or parish staff/volunteers, who may have an increased workload as a result, as well as trying to support parishioners and coming to terms with their own feelings on the situation. Arrangements for what support may be appropriate to put in place for those individuals should be considered by the SCMG and may include the availability of a senior member of clergy, or support from a priest from a neighbouring parish.

4G.6 - Impact on Church communities

When an elected member voluntarily steps down from duties because of a safeguarding allegation, this can have a significant impact on:

- members of the Church community (e.g. parishioners);
- other volunteer or elected members of the Church, such as PCC members, lay ministers, churchwardens, parish and Church school staff;
- victims and survivors who are part of the Church;
- the family, relatives and friends of the respondent.

As a result, it is important to consider and appropriately manage how the circumstances surrounding an allegation will be communicated to those groups and the support that may need to be put in place. What those communications and support may need to look like will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the SCMG.

It can happen that the members of a Church community are divided in their attitude and loyalties, with some expressing disbelief about what is being suggested and compassion towards the respondent, while others blaming the respondent or the Church Body, and expressing strong anger towards one or the other. It is not unusual for people to come together

to support and advocate on behalf of the respondent. On the other hand, feelings of disbelief, anger and fear that others known to them may have been abused can impact on a Church community's culture and can persist for years. Those responsible for the leadership of a Church community may need to consider undertaking mediation and community healing efforts to address such impacts.

Communications

Care should be taken as to who shares information about the case, how it is shared and with whom, as well as the impact that this can have on those receiving the information, including the complainant and respondent.

The SCMG should decide whether and what communications are released to the members of the Church community. This should be done with advice from the relevant Director of Communications. Advice from a Diocesan Registrar or the relevant Data Protection Officer may also need to be sought. The respondent should be invited to express their wishes regarding the way in which communications should be released, including the way in which communications should be released to their family members or relatives and close friends. Consideration should also be given to protect the complainant's safety and wellbeing.

Any information released publicly should be proportionate and should not compromise any disciplinary and/or statutory processes. Where appropriate, any communications released should be agreed with statutory services, and the respondent should be informed what is going to be shared. Whatever is shared in the public domain should be minimal and necessary – sharing detailed information about the respondent and their life and activity in the Church, where there is not a clear reason to do so, would not be proportionate.

Most communications released should include a reference to the Safeguarding Officer's contact details – ensuring that, where there is the possibility of multiple victims linked to the respondent, those victims have an avenue for disclosure. This also applies to victims who decide to disclose their experiences of abuse as a result of seeing the communications, even if their experiences are not linked to the respondent. References to available support should also be included.

4G.7 - 4G.14 - The aims and scope of safeguarding enquiries

The safeguarding enquiries carried out by Safeguarding Officers are not the equivalent of a police investigation, a social care assessment or an investigation as part of a disciplinary procedure. The enquiries are **not** focused on establishing a respondent's guilt. They are instead focused on the assessment and management of safeguarding risks linked to a member of clergy's continued activity in the Church. However, information gathered through the processes outlined in this Code may be shared with statutory services and may be used to initiate disciplinary processes.

The scope of any safeguarding enquiries carried out by Safeguarding Officers should be clearly defined and linked closely to the allegation and the respondent's role in the Church. Where factual information has been established through other processes, for instance in criminal or civil proceedings or in a disciplinary process, that information should be taken into account.

The SCMG will use the information gathered as a result of these enquiries to determine if, on the balance of probabilities there is evidence of a safeguarding risk. "On the balance of probabilities" means 'more likely than not'.

As the SCMG considers the information gathered from the lens of identifying indicators of safeguarding risks, they may uncover other indicators of ongoing safeguarding risks, which would need to be assessed and managed.

For the purposes of this Code, the following definitions are used:

- **Substantiated** means that, on the balance of probabilities there is sufficient evidence to substantiate the existence of an ongoing safeguarding risk.
- **Unsubstantiated** means that, on the balance of probabilities there is insufficient evidence to substantiate the existence of an ongoing safeguarding risk.

Risk Assessment – please refer to Section 5

Outcomes, closure and Long – Term risk – please refer to Section 6

Section 5: Risk Assessment

*This core pathway must be followed for **all** allegations except for those in Pathway 4C (Managing risk in the Church Community) and Section 4D (Managing posthumous allegations)*

It must be read alongside specific considerations in each of the other Pathways.

Section 1: Triage and Referrals

Section 2: Initial Contact

Section 3: Safeguarding Case Management Group

Section 4: Specific Pathways

Section 5: Risk Assessment

- 5.1 – 5.10 Risk Assessments
- 5.11 External Risk Assessment Quality Assurance
- 5.12 Sharing Risk Assessment Reports

Section 6: Outcomes, Closure and Long-term risk management

Requirements:

5.1 Where a risk assessment has been carried out in respect of the respondent by statutory services, the Safeguarding Officer must seek to gain a copy of that assessment.

5.2 Where such a risk assessment is not suitable for the management of risk within the Church context, then the Safeguarding Officer must ensure:

- for non-clergy a separate risk assessment must be carried out.
- for clergy, a recommendation to the bishop to direct a risk assessment under Canon C30 must be made.

5.3 When carrying out a risk assessment in relation to clergy, the Safeguarding Officer must apply the Safeguarding (Clergy Risk Assessment) Regulations 2025. Safeguarding Officers and external risk assessors must familiarise themselves with this legislation before undertaking a risk assessment and must ensure that any risk assessment carried out meets the relevant legal requirements.

5.4 Where the bishop, having considered the formal advice from a Safeguarding Officer, does not make direction for a risk assessment to be undertaken, the bishop must provide the reasons for this in writing, which must be added to the case files.

5.5 If a member of the SCMG, including the Safeguarding Officer, believes that the bishop is acting in a way that does not manage risk effectively, they must escalate the matter to the NST.

5.6 For members of clergy <u>only</u>, the Safeguarding Officer, in consultation with the SCMG, must decide if the risk assessment should be carried out by the Safeguarding Officer or an external risk assessor, by taking into account:

- the complexity of a case;
- whether specific knowledge and skills are needed for the delivery of the risk assessment, based on the circumstances of each case; and
- the existence of any conflicts of interest

5.7 Where the Safeguarding Officer decides that a risk assessment needs to be carried out by an external assessor, the bishop must ensure that appropriate resources are made available for the risk assessment to be carried out, and a risk assessor from the approved list must be appointed.

5.8 The risk assessment must focus on assessing any specific risks in the Church context, and not the general level of risk as assessed by statutory services.

5.9 When carrying out a risk assessment, the Safeguarding Officer must use the approved national forms.

5.10 A risk assessment report must contain a set of recommendations focused on the effective management of any risks identified within the Church context, in line with relevant regulations and law.

5.11 The NST must regularly review the quality of risk assessments carried out by external assessors and must use information from these reviews to inform the list of external assessors that it maintains centrally.

5.12 The Safeguarding Officer must share the final risk assessment report with the SCMG (redacted if needed).

Guidance

5.1 - 5.10 Risk assessments

Risk assessments play an important role in making Church communities safe for all those who participate in them. The purpose of a risk assessment is to assess, or to contribute to the assessment of, risks of harm to children, young people or vulnerable adults, that may be presented by a respondent. Such risks are considered within the context of the respondent being a member of a Church Body, in relation to their specific role within the Church, and considering the ability of a Church community to manage such risks.

In addition to the risks of harm described above, the Safeguarding Officer should consider the respondent's current and previous roles in the Church, any position of authority or influence they hold or have held, and the effect this may have on practice and culture within the Church Body.

Each assessment helps to achieve the following:

- the identification and evaluation of risks of harm to children, young people or vulnerable adults, in terms of their likelihood and impact in the church context;
- how risks may be addressed or managed, and what safety would look like for individual children, young people or vulnerable adults in the church context;
- a shared understanding and common approach by those with safeguarding responsibilities to the management and reduction of risk; and
- a plan which seeks to ensure the safety of children, young people or vulnerable adults, and to address the safety of the person who presents a risk.

The Church's approach to risk assessment is underpinned by the following principles:

- a commitment to a just, fair and proportionate process;
- a non-discriminatory approach to risk assessment and risk management;
- an approach to risk assessment which is evidence-led and objective; and
- communicating well and including respondents in the process, which is done with their involvement, rather than to them.

A risk assessment will generally be carried out by the Safeguarding Officer. In some instances, involving members of clergy only, the Safeguarding Officer in consultation with the SCMG, might decide that a risk assessment needs to be carried out by an external assessor and must then appoint an external assessor from the list of approved assessors maintained by the NST. External risk assessors are professionals who hold proven qualifications, experience and expertise in carrying out risk assessments.

The Safeguarding Officer, in consultation with the SCMG, should prepare the Terms of Reference of a risk assessment, in line with the relevant regulations and canon law, which should include estimated timelines. Where an external risk assessor is involved, the Safeguarding Officer should share the Terms of Reference and any other relevant information with the external assessor.

Additional guidelines on the Church's approach to risk assessment can be found on the Safeguarding Learning Portal. These highlight the need to embrace a systemic approach to risk assessment, which challenges the professionals involved in a case to look beyond lineal causal explanations that seek to apportion blame. Instead, professionals should consider the factors that can impact their thinking about risk and seek to understand what each person involved in a particular situation is doing to sustain a problem, and what can be changed to achieve safety. The emphasis here is on contextualising risk and analysing it, rather than merely describing it. The key considerations that a risk assessor must take into account when carrying out an assessment include:

- What is the nature of the risks identified?
- In what circumstances would they occur? (when, why, how)
- How likely are the risks to occur?
- Who would be involved or affected, and what would be the severity of the impact?
- What are the specific circumstances within the given Church context in which the risks identified might become issues?

The guidelines also emphasise the need to be comfortable with a degree of safe uncertainty, in which professionals recognise that not everything can be known about a situation, but that enough efforts must be made to obtain information that can help make the situation safer.

The Safeguarding Officer must use the Church's approved standard risk analysis and risk management form when carrying out a risk assessment.

When carrying out a risk assessment, the Safeguarding Officer should consider whether there are any risks of harm to children, young people or vulnerable adults connected to the respondent's family or household, including partners/ex-partners and any children in their care, and must act on any identified risks, making immediate statutory referrals where needed.

The Safeguarding Officer should also establish whether the respondent attends or seeks to attend multiple Church settings, whether within the same diocese, across dioceses, or in informal arrangements. Records should clearly document what enquiries were made to establish this and the rationale for any decisions taken, particularly where limited enquiries have been made.

When a risk assessment is completed, the report that is prepared should set out the risk assessor's opinion on the nature and likely extent of any safeguarding risk, and their recommendations on how to address or manage any such risk.

5.11 - Assessments conducted by external assessors

In line with the relevant regulations and canon law, when commissioning a risk assessment, the Safeguarding Officer should supply the respondent with a written statement which:

- sets out the Terms of Reference of the assessment;
- gives the reason for requiring the assessment;
- confirms whether the assessment will be done by the Safeguarding Officer or by an external assessor, and gives the name of the external assessor, if applicable;
- explains how the assessment will be carried out;
- for clergy only, reminds the respondent of their right to request the President of the Tribunals to review the direction to undertake a risk assessment; and
- refers to the possibility that a copy of the final risk assessment, in full or redacted form, may be shared with other individuals involved in the management of the case or for the purposes of risk management, including relevant statutory partners.

In line with the relevant regulations and canon law, a respondent has a right to see a draft of the risk assessment report, which may need to be redacted to remove information about third parties. They then have 14 days to ask questions and make submissions, in writing, to the assessor. The assessor then has 14 days to reply, followed by 14 days for the respondent to come back with responses. These timescales may be extended by the Safeguarding Officer if they consider this to be “reasonable in all circumstances”. A respondent should also receive a final version of the report, in full or redacted form.

External Risk Assessments Quality Assurance

Risk assessments carried out by Safeguarding Officers will be quality assured by regional Safeguarding Leads, in line with the Quality Assurance Framework.[23]

Previously, concerns have been raised regarding the quality of risk assessments carried out by external assessors. To address this, a quality assurance function has been embedded in the Code. This will involve the NST reviewing a dip-sample of external risk assessments every year to check for depth, consistency and other quality markers.

[23] This framework is currently being developed as part of the project focused on implementing Recommendation 8 of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

5.12 - Sharing the risk assessment report

Past experiences have shown that it is extremely important for all SCMG members to have the same information when they advise on risk management. To this end, the Safeguarding Officer should ensure that all members of the SCMG receive a copy of the risk assessment report. Where the report includes references to third parties who have not given their consent for their names and information to be shared with the SCMG members, a redacted version of the report may be shared. Similarly, there may be instances in which a report contains detailed information about a respondent's personal life, which may not be of significance for the ongoing management of risk. The collection of such information should be avoided in the first place, however, if the Safeguarding Officer has deemed it appropriate to include, then they should consider sharing a redacted form of the report with the SCMG members.

The Safeguarding Officer may also be required to share the report with others involved in the management of risk – for instance, with any relevant statutory partners or with the relevant bishop. In such cases, a redacted version of the report may also be shared. Legal advice should be sought and any information shared should be proportionate and meet the requirements under data protection legislation.

Section 6: Outcomes, closure and the long-term management of risk

*This core pathway must be followed for **all** allegations except for those in Pathway 4C (Managing risk in the Church Community) and Section 4D (Managing posthumous allegations)*

It must be read alongside specific considerations in each of the other Pathways.

Section 1: Triage and Referral
Section 2: Initial Contact and Support
Section 3: The Role of Safeguarding Case Management Groups
Section 4: Specific Pathways
Section 5: Risk Assessment

Section 6: Outcomes, Closure and Long-term risk management

6.1 Further action to manage ongoing risks
6.2 – 6.4 Safeguarding Development Plan
6.5 – 6.6 Church Safety Plans
6.7 – 6.8 Church Safety Plan Reviews
6.9 Ending a Church Safety Plan
6.10, 6.12 Refusal and breaches of a Church Safety Plan
6.11 Sharing information about a Church Safety Plan
6.13 – 6.16 Apologies, closure and ongoing support to complainant

Requirements:

Outcomes and the long-term management of risk

6.1 Taking into account the recommendations made in the risk assessment and any other relevant information, the Safeguarding Officer, in consultation with the

SCMG where appropriate, must decide if/what further action is needed to manage ongoing risks.

Safeguarding Development Plan

6.2 The Safeguarding Development Plan must be developed by the Safeguarding Officer and must be signed by the respondent.

6.3 The Safeguarding Development Plan must specify clearly:

- the rationale for the proposed additional learning, development and support;
- the expectations from the respondent;
- the expected outcomes and how these will be reviewed / measured; and
- how the Plan will be monitored and by whom, including agreed review points and when the Plan is due to be closed.

6.4 Before closing a Safeguarding Development Plan, the Safeguarding Officer must organise a reflective session with the respondent, to assess if all the requirements and expected outcomes in the Plan were met. The outcomes of the reflective session must be discussed with the other members of the SCMG.

Church Safety Plan

6.5 A Church Safety Plan must specify any requirements that are placed on an individual in order to maintain their own safety and the safety of others.

6.6 A Church Safety Plan must:

- be proportionate to the risks identified, including their likelihood and impact;
- be drafted by the Safeguarding Officer, in consultation with the respondent, the SCMG, the relevant statutory agencies (e.g. police) and any other relevant parties;
- consider the support that can be put in place for the respondent and / or the wider Church community to enhance protective factors and minimise risks;
- be drafted using the approved national templates;

- specify how compliance with the Plan will be monitored and by whom, including how any breaches will be reported; and
- be dated and signed by all relevant parties, i.e. the Safeguarding Officer, the respondent and anyone involved in providing support and monitoring arrangements.

6.7 A Church Safety Plan must contain a review date based on the specific circumstances but must also allow for earlier review should these circumstances change. As a minimum, every Church Safety Plan must be reviewed every 12 months.

6.8 The review must be carried out by the Safeguarding Officer, or their appointed deputy, in consultation with the respondent, the SCMG, the relevant statutory agencies and anyone involved in providing support and monitoring the arrangements set out in the Plan.

6.9 If the Safeguarding Officer is satisfied at any review that the level of risk is such that a Plan is no longer needed, the Plan must be ended, and all relevant parties must be notified. The decision to end a Plan must be made in consultation with the respondent, the SCMG, the relevant statutory agencies and anyone involved in providing support and monitoring arrangements.

6.10 Where the respondent refuses to enter into a Safeguarding Development Plan or a Church Safety Plan, the Safeguarding Officer must:

- consider the respondent's reasons for disagreeing with such arrangements, and whether there is scope to amend such arrangements in order to gain the agreement of the respondent, whilst not compromising the safety of the complainant or of others; and
- consider if the risks identified should be managed using another option.
- Record any refusal and the reasons given in the case files.
- Consider whether the refusal requires a reassessment of risk and whether alternative risk management options are required.
- Where other agencies (for example; police) are already involved, they must be informed at the earliest opportunity about a person's unwillingness to agree to a Church safety plan or any breach of the plan's requirements.

6.11 In the event of a person who is subject to a Church Safety Plan moving and continuing to either exercise ministry or, if not ordained, worship in a different diocese the Safeguarding Officer must share a copy of the Church Safety Plan with the Safeguarding Officer in the new diocese.

6.12 Where any Church Officer becomes aware of a breach of the Church Safety Plan, they must report the breaches to the DSO. Where statutory agencies are involved, the DSO must inform the statutory services of the breach.

Closure

6.13 Prior to closing a case which it has managed, the SCMG must consider:

- whether an apology to the complainant is needed;
- if any additional or ongoing support for the complainant or the respondent is needed, and how this will be coordinated after the closure of the case; and
- if any additional or ongoing support for any Church community affected is needed, and how this will be coordinated after the closure of the case.

6.14 The Chair of the SCMG and the Safeguarding Officer (or, if appropriate, another SCMG member) must write to the complainant and the respondent to inform them about the outcomes and closure of a case. This applies even if the risk was found to be unsubstantiated.

6.15 The Safeguarding Officer must record the outcomes of the safeguarding process in the case files and in the clergy personal file (blue file) where appropriate. This applies even if the risk was found to be unsubstantiated.

6.16 After the closure of a case, the SCMG must undertake a reflective practice exercise, and must consider if a recommendation to undertake a Safeguarding Practice Review should be made to the DSAP (or an equivalent committee).

Guidance

6.1 - Further action to manage ongoing risks

Further action which may be needed can include the following:

- putting in place a Safeguarding Development Plan;
- putting in place a Church Safety Plan;
- making a recommendation to the bishop that the PTO / OPTO is withdrawn;
- submitting a complaint under the relevant disciplinary procedure;
- where the respondent is an ordinand, making a recommendation that a disciplinary process or equivalent is triggered by a TEI and / or making recommendations to the bishop relating to the ordinand's ongoing sponsorship, including whether this should be withdrawn.

Where statutory agencies remain involved in the ongoing management of a case, the Safeguarding Officer should continue to keep that engagement under active review. Where a statutory body has not responded adequately, or where no update has been received, Safeguarding Officers must consider whether escalation is required in line with the Escalation Framework, supplementary to this Code.

6.2 - 6.4 - Safeguarding Development Plan

A Safeguarding Development Plan can include training, mentoring, coaching, reflective sessions and any other support that will help the respondent to:

- reflect on and correct any mistakes, and
- improve their safeguarding knowledge and competency.

The Safeguarding Officer and the SCMG members must ensure that there is a clear rationale for how the additional learning, development and support will contribute to these aims. The exact requirements or arrangements put in place will depend on the nature of the allegation.

The Plan should include a defined timeframe within which the respondent is expected to meet any requirements. Clear review points and monitoring arrangements should also be built into the Plan, to ensure that the respondent receives support and is making progress towards improving their practice. These arrangements may involve the Safeguarding Officer or any of

the other SCMG members, as well as any other relevant Church Officers who may need to play a role, provided that this is discussed and agreed with them. A Safeguarding Development Plan template is available. A respondent's failure to engage with safeguarding training may constitute misconduct or may be a breach of their employment contract or volunteer agreement.

6.5 - 6.6 - Church Safety Plans

The aim of a Church Safety Plan is to set clear boundaries which allow a respondent to continue to deliver their role and ministry in the Church safely. A Church Safety Plan is not meant to be punitive in nature. Church Safety Plans can be put in place to protect both the complainant, other members of the Church, and the respondent. The intention behind setting certain boundaries is to acknowledge the risks that have been identified and find proportionate ways to manage them.

Church Safety Plans are most effective when they are drafted in a collaborative manner. The Safeguarding Officer, other members of the SCMG (where a SCMG was held), anyone involved in monitoring the Plan (such as churchwardens or Parish Safeguarding Officers) and the respondent should be involved in the drafting of the Plan. This will ensure that the requirements contained within the Plan are sufficient and proportionate for the management of the risks identified, as well as enforceable.

The drafting of the terms of the Church Safety Plan should be informed by the findings of any safeguarding enquiries and risk assessments carried out and should include considerations of both risk and protective factors. When drafting a Plan, Safeguarding Officers and others are asked to consider what the risks within the Church context are, what is working well, and what can be done to further mitigate the identified risks. The needs of complainants should be central to any discussions about a Church Safety Plan, balanced against the need to restrict the worship and work of the respondent. Careful consideration should be given to situations in which the complainant is a member of the respondent's family and attends the same church.

A template for a Church Safety Plan is provided. The types of requirements that may be included in a Church Safety Plan include:

- not meeting children, young people and / or vulnerable adults alone on Church ground;
- stopping and avoiding any contact with the victim and their family;
- attending designated meetings only;

- sitting apart from children, young people and / or vulnerable adults during service;
- staying away from areas of the building where children, young people and / or vulnerable adults meet;
- only attending a house / home group where there are no children, young people and / or vulnerable adults;
- declining hospitality where there are children, young people and / or vulnerable adults present;
- never working or being part of a mixed-age group that includes children, young people and / or vulnerable adults;
- taking no official role in the Church or any role of responsibility where they are trusted by others[24].
- attending services at a particular time of day.

It is important to note that members of clergy, by the nature of their role, are trusted individuals who will inevitably come into contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults as part of their ministry. As such, imposing blanket requirements, such as "never meeting with children, young people and / or vulnerable adults", will not be an effective or realistic way to manage risk. Instead, requirements should be specific and should include mitigations.

The Safeguarding Officer will have a duty to monitor the overall compliance of a respondent with the Plan, but compliance with specific requirements may be delegated to other relevant members of the Church (for instance, senior members of clergy who oversee the respondent's professional development and ministry, or Church Officers at the parish level, such as churchwardens). Anyone involved in the monitoring of the Plan will need to meet with the respondent regularly, maintain records of any contact and share those records with the Safeguarding Officer or relevant statutory agencies, as needed. It is important to note the risks that an individual may present will be held by the relevant DBF, PCC or other governance body. In their roles as trustees, DBF and PCC members, Cathedral Chapter members and others have a responsibility to manage safeguarding risks within their organisation[25] . They should, therefore, seek to work closely with the Safeguarding Officer and should ensure that they are content that safeguarding risks are appropriately managed.

[24] Individuals included in a barred list or who have been convicted of certain offences are disqualified from holding specific offices in the Church, including membership of a PCC, deanery synod, diocesan synod or the General Synod, see the Church Representation Rules 2022 (as amended), Rule 68.
[25] See the Charity Commission guidance on "Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees"

It must be made clear to the parties who are involved in the drafting and monitoring of the Plan that no information about the Plan must be disclosed to others unless there is a clear purpose and justification for doing so. This would include where the respondent breaches the Plan, therefore requiring further disciplinary or otherwise action to be taken by the Church; or where information needs to be shared with statutory services, for the protection of children, young people or vulnerable adults or if it is in the public interest to do so. Expert advice must be sought before sharing any information about the Plan with others and the rationale for sharing the information should be recorded in the case files.

6.7 - 6.8 - Church Safety Plan Reviews

Church Safety Plans should be kept under regular review to ensure that they remain effective in managing risk. It is good practice for a Plan to be reviewed by the same group who drafted it. As a minimum, the Safeguarding Officer, the respondent and anyone involved in providing support and monitoring the Plan should be part of the review. A review should cover the following considerations:

- what is and is not working;
- whether there have been any breaches;
- a review of any risk and protective factors;
- any changes required to the terms or requirements in the Plan (including whether the Plan continues to be needed); and
- an agreement on the date of the next review.

Reviews might trigger the need for a revised risk assessment. A consideration of all risk factors, including any changing or new factors should be part of the review and should be explored if relevant.

Minutes should be kept from all review meetings and retained in the case files or on MyConcern or equivalent case management system.

6.9 - Ending a Church Safety Plan

If at any point, such as review, the Safeguarding Officer is satisfied that the respondent no longer poses a risk, they must consider ending the Plan. To do this, the Safeguarding Officer

should conduct a final risk assessment including gathering feedback from any monitoring parties involved, and where appropriate, the SCMG and from statutory services. Where a Plan has ended due to the death of the respondent, then no further action is needed beyond appropriate recording.

The final risk assessment should be evidence based and should address:

- whether the risks that led to the Plan have reduced, and the evidence for this, including the respondent's compliance with the Plan and any breaches since it began;
- any change in the respondent's role, circumstances or access to children, young people and vulnerable adults;
- whether protective factors are in place to manage any remaining risk without a Plan; and
- any police, disciplinary or other proceedings that are still outstanding.

The decision to end a Plan should be based on this evidence. Where the evidence is not available or does not support ending the Plan, it should continue and be reviewed again.

The Safeguarding Officer must meet with the respondent to discuss this decision, allowing them the opportunity to provide input.

Once the decision is agreed to end the Plan, the decision must be given in writing to the respondent and communicated in writing to any relevant stakeholders. This must be recorded, addressing each of the factors above, along with the rationale and any ongoing recommendations, on the respondent's file, using the template provided. Where there are uncertainties about information sharing or the implications of refusal when ending a plan, consideration should be given to seeking legal advice.

6.10 - 6.12 – Refusal and breaches of a Church Safety Plan

Where a respondent refuses to enter into a Safeguarding Development Plan or a Church Safety Plan, the Safeguarding Officer should consider the respondent's reasons for disagreeing with the proposed arrangements, and whether there is scope to amend them to gain the respondent's agreement, without compromising the safety of the complainant or others. Where agreement cannot be reached, the Safeguarding Officer should consider whether the risks identified can be managed using another option.

Any refusal, and the reasons given, must be recorded in the case files. The Safeguarding Officer must also consider whether the refusal requires a reassessment of risk, and whether alternative risk management options are needed.

Any breach of the Church Safety Plan must be reported to the Safeguarding Officer as soon as it becomes known. If the person refuses to agree to appropriate restrictions, then it may also be necessary, for safeguarding purposes, to make a wider circle of people aware of that person's history. This would need to be discussed with the relevant Data Protection Officer or the Diocesan Registrar first, to ensure that there is sufficient purpose and an appropriate lawful basis for sharing that information.

If statutory agencies are involved, they must also be informed, at the earliest opportunity, about a person's unwillingness to agree to a Church Safety Plan or any breach of the Plan's requirements. In certain circumstances, agencies may use this information to apply other powers that they may have.

Sharing information about a church safety plan

In the event of a person who is subject to a Church Safety Plan moving and continuing to exercise ministry in a different diocese, a copy of the Church Safety Plan should be shared with the Safeguarding Officer in the new diocese. If a respondent moves to a different Christian denomination or Church, or to a role outside of a Church, advice should be sought from statutory services and the relevant Data Protection Lead as to what information may need to be shared with the respondent's new organisation / employer. Please also refer to guidance in the section on "Responding to safeguarding allegations involving non-recent events", where the respondent is alive but has left the Church Body in which the events are alleged to have taken place" above.

6.13 - 6.16 Apologies, closure and ongoing support to the complainant

Ensuring that the complainant is informed about the outcomes of the safeguarding process is an important element of providing a degree of closure. Whilst the process under this Code cannot provide the same level of closure as a criminal justice or disciplinary process, communicating to the complainant that their allegation was taken seriously, and sharing the

actions that were undertaken as a result of them raising their allegation with the Church, can provide a degree of reassurance.

Complainants might feel hurt, frustrated, disappointed or disagree with the outcomes of the safeguarding process. Providing them with a safe space to express those emotions, can be beneficial in supporting them to move forward. To this end, it is good practice for Safeguarding Officers to ask complainants what their preferred method of communicating this decision would be. This could include offering a face-to-face discussion or a call to discuss the outcomes of the process, if this would be beneficial to them.

Ongoing support for complainants must be offered in line with the "Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse" guidance. In certain circumstances, the SCMG must consider the provision of an apology to the complainant. Section 7 of the guidance includes requirements and guidance regarding apologies, including consideration of how the complainant would like the apology provided and by whom.

Providing closure to the respondent

Feedback from respondents has consistently emphasised the importance of providing closure when a safeguarding process is concluded. Communicating that a process has come to an end, the outcomes of it and the boundaries of any future engagement (e.g. if a Church Safety Plan is put in place) plays an important part in this. To this end, it is good practice for Safeguarding Officers to ask respondents if a face-to-face discussion or a call to discuss the outcomes of the process would be beneficial to them.

Recording information

Safeguarding Officers should ensure that all the key information regarding a case is appropriately recorded on the National Safeguarding Case Management System (NSCMS).

Safeguarding Officers should ensure that records are made of all key safeguarding discussions, decisions and actions taken in the management of a case. This includes recording consideration of whether an individual is involved in more than one Church setting, the information available at the time, and the rationale for any decisions taken, including where no further enquiries are made.

This includes safeguarding discussions between clergy and Safeguarding Officers, and other relevant safeguarding discussions, information about referrals, meetings held, decisions and outcomes.

Records should be made contemporaneously or as soon as practical, after the discussions or decision has taken place and should clearly record the rationale for safeguarding decisions. Where appropriate, records of discussions or meetings should be shared with those involved to confirm accuracy. This applies to safeguarding discussions across all stages of the process and is not solely limited to formal interviews or meetings.

Where an SCMG was convened, the complainant and respondent should be notified that any correspondence, records or reports prepared for the purposes of that group may be later used in a legal process.

Church Bodies will need to make it clear to complainants and respondents what data will be processed and why, and where and for how long that data will be stored. Church Bodies can include this information in a Privacy Notice.

It is important to note that, under data protection legislation, individuals have a right to ask an organisation whether or not they are using or storing their personal information, by making a Subject Access Request (SAR). Guidance on SARs can be found on the website of the Information Commissioner's Office. Any records made by the Safeguarding Officer as part of the management of a case could be subject to a SAR. Guidance on records management is available on the Church of England website, which includes specific guidance on the management of safeguarding records.

For members of clergy, key information about the allegation should be added on that member of clergy's personnel file, with a cross-reference to any personal files held on a relevant case management system. Further guidance on clergy personnel records can be found in the "Personal files relating to clergy" House of Bishops' policy.

Reflective learning exercises and Safeguarding Practice Reviews

As set out in the Safeguarding Practice Review Code of Practice, it is a requirement that every SCMG conducts a form of reflective exercise after the case has reached a conclusion. In some cases, this may be a very short exercise, in others it may require the commissioning of

a formal Safeguarding Practice Review. Further information on when to commission a formal Review, and the types of exercises that can be undertaken can be found in the Code.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Insurance and civil claims

When an insurance claim is intimated, the Safeguarding Officer (or whoever receives the initial letter) should bring this information to the attention of the Diocesan Secretary, who is responsible for raising the matter with the relevant insurer. If a claim is received directly by a PCC, they should notify the Safeguarding Officer, however it is for the PCC themselves to refer to their insurance company directly.

Where a complainant brings forward, or is considering bringing forward, a civil claim against a Church Body, the Church Body should take into account the following considerations:

- A Church Body should be supportive in providing the complainant with information on who the insurers are, explain that this is an option and explain that taking up this option would not impact on any support provided under the Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse guidance.

- A civil claim does not prevent a Church Body from apologising to the complainant and further guidance on apologies can be found in the Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse guidance.

Appendix 2 - National Clergy Register

The National Clergy Register is a publicly available list of all ordained clergy in the Church of England who are authorised to minister. A member of the public can search the Register to verify whether someone has PTO or licence to hold office, in the same way that they can search for a qualified medical professional on the national medical directory. The National Clergy Register was introduced under, and should be managed in line with, the National Ministry Register (Clergy) Regulations 2020.

Under the Regulations, within each diocese, the bishop acts as the “Registration Officer” responsible for providing the relevant information to keep the Register up to date. Bishops are supported by Diocesan Operation Users (DOUs), nominated members of staff who are authorised to update the People System on behalf of the bishop.

When a member of clergy is suspended, temporarily steps down from duties, or has their licence or PTO temporarily or permanently withdrawn, they need to be **immediately** removed from the Register. In dioceses, the Safeguarding Officer will inform the point of contact or Registration Officer. For relevant cases, the NST will inform the relevant Archbishop. If the respondent's suspension is later revoked, if they return to duties or if they are granted PTO again, the Registration Officer or DOU must be informed, so that the member of clergy can be added again to the Register. The Safeguarding Officer or NST Caseworker does not need to share the full details, only the need for a member of clergy to be added or removed from the Register.

Appendix 3 - Expectations regarding the conduct of members of clergy

Members of clergy are expected to meet high standards of personal and professional conduct. Some of these standards are set out in the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy. The Guidelines are not definitive but can be used as a basis for understanding the expected behaviours from someone who is part of the clergy.

In addition, the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 (CDM) provides a definition of what is considered "misconduct", in Section 8 (1). This includes failures to comply with the requirements set out in a code issued under section 5A of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016. The "Clergy Discipline Measure 2003: Code of Practice" includes additional guidance on what is considered "misconduct" under the Measure (see pages 17-21).[26]

It must also be noted that, under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, a member of clergy may hold a "position of trust" in relation to a child, for example where they regularly teach, train, supervise or instruct a child in a religious setting. It is against the law for someone in a position of trust to engage in sexual activity with a child in their care, even if that child is over the age of consent (16 or over). Allegations of this nature must be reported to the police. See Position of Trust in Section 4A for more detail.

[26] The Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 is due to be replaced with the Clergy Conduct Measure. The current Code of Practice accompanying the Measure will also be replaced with a new Code of Practice. Once these changes are enacted, the guidance in this Code will be updated.

Appendix 4 - Right to attend church services

A parishioner[27] has the legal right to attend divine service and, they cannot be excluded from a particular service unless there is a specific condition in a Sexual Harm Prevention Order or other court order, which restricts an offender's or ex-offender's movements or actions in some way. All Church Safety Plans which relate to parishioners are therefore voluntary.

Although a parishioner has a right to attend public worship, this does not extend to other events taking place in the Church - for example, someone who presents safeguarding risks can be excluded from attending gatherings or events after or outside of a service, including the meetings of specific groups or clubs. If the person in question is not a parishioner, they have no legal right to attend a parish church, even on Sundays or Holy Days.[28]

The duty to provide an opportunity to worship for all also applies to cathedrals, and for cathedrals the ability to exclude a person from divine service is further limited. The Legal Advisory Commission, has advised that a cathedral may have a legal status and role which is both local and national. This means that it would be wrong to refuse entry to any person who resides in England, unless it could be shown that they had some unlawful purpose for being present. Further, it is possible that even overseas visitors could assert an interest in being admitted on the basis that some cathedrals (e.g. Canterbury Cathedral, St Paul's Cathedral) have a place in "international Christendom"

[27] A parishioner is any person who resides within the confines of the parish boundaries and any person who does not reside within the boundary, but occupies (without being resident in it) land within that boundary and pays a rent or otherwise - e.g. A shop owner.
[28] Cole v Police Constable 443A [1937] 1KB 136.



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Threshold Tool: Rapid Triage Gateway and Matrices

Terminology in this tool follows the *Managing Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations* Code of Practice. See the Terminology Checker for definitions.

This threshold tool is designed for use alongside the CofE's Managing Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations Code of Practice (the MA Code) and the Safeguarding in the Church chapter in the safeguarding e-manual. It provides a framework to support practitioners in identifying concerns that might require:

1) an immediate response by the police, ambulance or other emergency services;
2) a referral or consultation with relevant statutory safeguarding services;
3) consideration under the appropriate Church safeguarding or *Managing Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations* pathway; and / or
4) where the safeguarding threshold is not met, consideration of whether another Church response, advice, signposting or no further action is appropriate.

The tool itself provides information for Safeguarding Officers and others on safeguarding thresholds. It is principally designed to assist Diocesan and Cathedral Safeguarding Officers to make decisions about complex situations by applying a consistent approach to identifying levels of need and risk. It supports professional judgement about whether the available information does not ordinarily meet safeguarding criteria, may meet safeguarding criteria and merits further professional judgement, or clearly indicates a safeguarding concern.

Important: This tool does not replace or supersede the child or adult protection functions of statutory authorities. Where a safeguarding concern meets the threshold for police contact or intervention by Children's or Adult's Services, **statutory processes take precedence over Church internal pathways.** Church pathways are designed to operate alongside statutory processes, not as a substitute for them.

PART 1: Use this as the core 'Rapid Triage Tool'. It includes a 'Gateway Checklist'.

PART 2: Use the matrices to consider incidents / concerns in the different contexts they arise and determine what action is necessary.

IMPORTANT: The tool is not intended to be a 'tick-box' exercise, and the indicators provided within the matrices are not exhaustive. It is designed as a quick-reference guide to support professional judgement and decision-making. Safeguarding indicators should always be considered alongside the specific context of an individual's needs and the presenting circumstances.

Threshold Tool: Rapid Triage Gateway and Matrices

Rapid Triage Gateway

Use this Gateway to identify the appropriate safeguarding or other response to a concern or allegation.

The Gateway does not replace professional judgement or the requirements of the Man*aging Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations* Code of Practice. It is intended to help practitioners identify the relevant next step and navigate to the appropriate section of this tool.

Step 1 – Is immediate action required?

- Is anyone in immediate danger, seriously injured, or in need of urgent medical assistance, or is a crime in progress?

YES → Contact the police or other emergency services as appropriate. Do not delay necessary statutory action while completing this tool.

Where the concern also involves a Church Officer or may require a Church safeguarding response, continue to Step 2 once immediate action has been taken.

NO → Go to Step 2

Step 2 – What is the Church connection?

Does the concern or allegation:

- relate to the conduct, behaviour or actions of a Church Officer;
- involve an alleged failure by a Relevant Person to follow a safeguarding requirement; or
- arise within a Church activity or setting and require a safeguarding response?

YES → Continue to Step 3

NO → Go to Step 6**: Concerns not involving a Church Officer**.

Step 3 – Does the concern potentially meet the Managing Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations criteria?

Consider the information available. Does it indicate that a Church Officer may have:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child or vulnerable person;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child or vulnerable person;
- behaved in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children or vulnerable people;
- behaved in a way that indicates they may be unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable people; or
- encouraged, directed or enabled another person to cause harm?

Threshold Tool: Rapid Triage Gateway and Matrices

The purpose of this stage is not to determine whether the allegation is proven. The question is whether the information is sufficient to require consideration under the *Managing Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations* Code.
YES → Continue to Step 4
NO → Go to Step 5: Other Church response / no safeguarding action.

Step 4 – Identify the appropriate safeguarding route

Child	**Vulnerable Adult**
Concern involving a Church Officer and a child	Concern involving a Church Officer and a vulnerable adult
Go to: Church Officer – Children Matrix	**Go to**: Church Officer – Adults Matrix

Other Adult/Transferable Risk	**Spiritual Abuse**
Behaviour towards another adult which may indicate safeguarding risk or unsuitability	Concern involving possible coercive or controlling use of religious authority
Go to: Church Officer – Adult / Transferable Risk guidance	**Go to**: Spiritual Abuse Indicators and Examples

Failure to Follow
Is the concern specifically about a Relevant Person failing to comply with a safeguarding requirement?
Go to: Failure to Follow / Pathway 4F in *Managing Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations* Code of Practice.

After identifying the relevant route, consider any required statutory referral and the appropriate *Managing Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations* pathway for the respondent's role.

Step 5 – If the Managing Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations threshold is not met

Not meeting the safeguarding threshold does not automatically mean another Church process is required.

Consider	**Possible Outcome**
Is any response required?	No further action
Is advice sufficient?	Advice/information/signposting
Is this primarily a pastoral matter?	Pastoral response
Does it concern employment, behaviour or role expectations?	HR/line management/conduct/volunteer management
Is there insufficient information?	Seek further information before deciding

Record the decision and the reasons for it.

Step 6 – Concerns not involving a Church Officer

Where the concern does not involve a Church Officer, consider whether there is nevertheless a safeguarding concern requiring statutory advice, referral or signposting.

Concern about a child	**Go to:** Children – Non-Church Officer Matrix
Concern about a vulnerable adult	**Go to:** Adults – Non-Church Officer Matrix

Where neither applies and there is no safeguarding role for the Church, provide appropriate information or signposting and record the decision as required.

Step 7 – Parallel actions

Once the appropriate safeguarding or other response has been identified, consider separately whether any additional action is required, including:

- police or statutory safeguarding referral;
- Local Authority Designated Officer or relevant adult safeguarding/PiPoT arrangements;
- escalation to the National Safeguarding Team;
- Safeguarding Serious Incident notification;
- Charity Commission reporting;
- recording on the appropriate case-management system; and
- any parallel employment, disciplinary or other Church process.

These requirements do not determine whether the safeguarding threshold is met and should be considered separately from the threshold decision.

Part 2: Matrices

Matrix 1: Emergency response

The Police and/or other emergency services should always be contacted when an individual is at immediate risk of harm / danger, or a crime is currently in progress.

Category	Immediate / Emergency Response Required
Domestic Abuse	A serious and immediate threat to an adult's or child's life by a violent partner or family member. An active domestic abuse incident where a child or adult has been injured or is being used as a shield. Stalking or harassment where there is an immediate threat to the person's safety or life
Education / Youth Provision / Choristers	A child missing in high-risk circumstances, particularly if linked to suspected exploitation or gang activity.
Extra-Familial Harm (CSE / CCE / Radicalisation / Modern Slavery)	A child or young person found in a location associated with serious violence, criminal or staying with a known high-risk exploiter. When a child or adult is missing and where exploitation is a known or suspected factor. An adult who is being exploited (i.e. their home has been cuckooed) and their life is believed to be in immediate danger.
Harmful Practices	Evidence or reports that a child is at immediate risk of being taken abroad for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or Forced Marriage. A child or adult disclosing they are currently being subjected to spirit possession or witchcraft rituals that involve physical harm.
Health	A child or adult being deliberately denied medical access for a life-threatening condition. Medical emergencies resulting from suspected harm. Acute physical deterioration, such as severe dehydration or malnutrition resulting from gross neglect.
Mental & Emotional Health	An individual expressing immediate suicidal ideation with clear intent and a plan. A person experiencing a violent psychotic episode or significant mental health symptoms that place themselves or others at imminent risk.

Threshold Tool: Rapid Triage Gateway and Matrices

Missing Children	Any child or young person who is missing, regardless of whether exploitation is known or suspected; all missing children require immediate reporting to the Police. A child missing from a cathedral or church setting, youth club, chorister activity, residential trip or overnight stay, including a child who leaves without permission or fails to return as expected. A missing child with heightened vulnerability, including a child who is looked after (LAC), a child with special or additional needs, a young carer, a child living in a domestic abuse refuge, or a child reportedly linked to county lines activity.
Physical Abuse & Neglect	Any situation involving an immediate threat of physical violence. Any physical assault involving an implement or weapon and incidents where harm has already been caused by physical violence. An unexplained / suspicious injury to a pre-mobile or non-mobile child (e.g., a baby who cannot yet crawl) where urgent medical assessment or immediate protective action is required. Discovery of a person living in squalid, unsanitary, or structurally dangerous conditions that pose an immediate risk to life.
Police Attention	A crime currently in progress, including robbery, possession of or dealing drugs, or intentional harm to others. Injury caused by a weapon or serious criminal activity involving firearms or gang-related violence.
Radicalisation & Extremism (Prevent)	A child or adult believed to be at immediate risk of travelling, or being taken, to join a terrorist or extremist group, or who is preparing to act on extremist beliefs. A disclosure, threat or plan to carry out an act of violence motivated by extremist, religious or ideological beliefs, including a threat against a place of worship, congregation or event. Possession of weapons, explosive materials or attack planning materials alongside expressed extremist views. A child or young person being actively groomed or radicalised by a known extremist individual or network, whether in person or online, where harm is imminent. Refer to the Police immediately and make a Prevent referral.

Threshold Tool: Rapid Triage Gateway and Matrices

Sexual Abuse & Activity	A direct allegation of recent sexual assault where the alleged perpetrator may still be present or the victim requires immediate forensic and medical care. Situations where a child or adult is believed to be in imminent danger of sexual exploitation or is being moved (trafficked) for the purpose of abuse.

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Matrix 2: Incidents or Concerns involving Children – not involving Church Officers

This matrix provides illustrative indicators for concerns about children arising outside the Church and not involving a Church Officer, for example concerns relating to home life, health or the wider community. The Church's role will normally be to listen, provide appropriate advice or signposting, and refer to statutory services where required.

! Risk can be difficult to establish, and individual indicators do not replace the Safeguarding Officer's professional judgement

These examples are illustrative only and do not replace local authority thresholds or professional judgement. Where there is uncertainty, consult the relevant local authority safeguarding service. Where there is immediate danger or urgent risk, follow Matrix 1.

Category	Level One: Does not ordinarily meet safeguarding criterion	Level Two: May meet safeguarding criterion – professional judgement required	Level Three: Clearly indicates safeguarding concern / urgent consideration
Domestic Abuse	Isolated incidents of conflict / disagreement with no evidence of abuse or impact; protective factors in place.	Children suffering emotional harm from witnessing abuse; alleged perpetrator shows no commitment to change.	Serious threat to life; child injured in domestic abuse incident; child traumatised or neglected.
Education	Some underachievement, occasional attendance concerns or school moves, with no indication that the child's welfare or development is being significantly affected	Persistent attendance issues, exclusion, significant unmet educational needs or parental/carer resistance to necessary support. Attendance issues/exclusions; milestones require targeted support; carer resists intervention.	Deliberate or persistent prevention of education, or educational neglect causing significant impairment to the child's development or wellbeing. Achievement seriously impacted; milestones significantly delayed (neglect); carer prevents learning.
Extra-Familial Harm (CSE / CCE / online harms /	Spending time in areas known for anti-social behaviour (ASB); unknown adults associating with the child in person or contacting the child online, through gaming or through social media,	Found in areas/properties known for exploitation; staying with suspected exploiters; indications of online grooming; sexual images requested or shared; exposure to radicalising material.	Circumstances that can have a profoundly negative impact, such as child sexual or physical abuse by high-risk individuals; online sexual abuse, including sexual

Threshold Tool: Rapid Triage Gateway and Matrices

Category	Level One: Does not ordinarily meet safeguarding criterion	Level Two: May meet safeguarding criterion – professional judgement required	Level Three: Clearly indicates safeguarding concern / urgent consideration
Radicalisation / Modern Slavery)	but without evidence of grooming, exploitation or harm.		images used to coerce or control the child; radicalisation; trafficking or modern slavery.
Harmful Practices	Information about cultural or family context alone, without any specific indication that a harmful practice is planned or that the child is at risk.	Evidence child is potentially at risk of FGM (e.g., travel to country of origin) or Forced Marriage.	Evidence child has been subjected to or is at imminent threat of FGM, Forced Marriage, or Spirit Possession.
Health	Occasional missed routine appointments, immunisations or inconsistent use of health services, with no evidence of harm or deterioration	Persistent failure to access necessary healthcare, or repeated missed treatment; suffers chronic problems	Complex health problems due to lack of access; carer denying professional access to child.
Mental & Emotional Health	Mild mental health condition; low self-esteem; occasional inconsistent parenting.	Specialist community intervention required; volatile family environment; self-harm (minor injury).	Imminent risk of self-harm/suicide; severe postnatal depression in carer; relationships broken down.
Physical Abuse & Neglect	Isolated minor shortcomings in care or supervision, without evidence of harm or a pattern of neglect.	Repeated persistent avoidance of professionals; consistent symptoms of neglect; frequent injuries.	Non-accidental injury; allegations of harm by parent / carer; physical signs of neglect.
Police Attention	Emerging association with antisocial or criminal activity, or indicators of vulnerability to grooming/exploitation, without evidence of significant harm.	Arrested for weapons/drugs; coerced for criminal gain; reoffending.	Persistent/serious criminal activity; risk of imminent significant harm from gang activities/weapons.

Threshold Tool: Rapid Triage Gateway and Matrices

Category	Level One: Does not ordinarily meet safeguarding criterion	Level Two: May meet safeguarding criterion – professional judgement required	Level Three: Clearly indicates safeguarding concern / urgent consideration
Psychological / Emotional Abuse & Bullying	Isolated incidents of name-calling, exclusion or online unkindness; child has trusted adults and can talk about it.	Persistent bullying, including online; carer belittles, scapegoats or humiliates the child; child fearful, withdrawn or markedly changed in behaviour.	Sustained psychological abuse, threats, intimidation or coercive control; bullying or online harassment causing significant harm, including risk of self-harm.
Sexual Abuse & Activity	Isolated age- or developmentally-inappropriate sexual behaviour requiring advice or further understanding, but without evidence of abuse or coercion.	Suspicions of peer-on-peer abuse; untreated STIs; accessing violent/exploitative pornography.	Direct allegation of sexual assault; child living with / in contact with known or suspected sex offender / violent offender; harmful sexual behaviour.

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Threshold Tool: Rapid Triage Gateway and Matrices

Matrix 3: Incidents or Concerns involving adults with care and support needs– not involving Church Officers

This matrix covers indicators that involve concerns about Adults with Care and Support Needs (Adults at Risk) due to factors outside of the Church (e.g., home life, health, or community issues).

Reference should always be made to the local threshold tool within the local authority area where the adult resides or is found.

! Risk can be difficult to establish, and individual indicators do not replace the Safeguarding Officer's professional judgement

Category	Level One: Does not ordinarily meet safeguarding criterion	Level Two: May meet safeguarding criterion – professional judgement required	Level Three: Clearly indicates safeguarding concern / urgent consideration
Discriminatory Abuse	Isolated insensitive or discriminatory remark, immediately corrected, with no indication of distress, targeting or wider pattern.	Repeated discriminatory remarks, harassment or exclusion causing distress; adult excluded from church activities, roles or services because of a protected characteristic; reasonable adjustments for a disability or condition not made despite being requested.	Hate crime or hate-motivated assault, threats or damage to property; sustained discriminatory harassment causing the adult to fear for their safety or to withdraw from church and community life.
Domestic Abuse	Isolated conflict or disagreement within a relationship, with no indication of abuse, coercion, fear or harm.	Unexplained marks on multiple occasions; unsatisfactory or confusing explanation of causes of harm; concerns over controlling behaviour or power imbalance in relationship; incidents where person of concern has behaved/acted aggressively in public, including at church or a church activity; stalking or harassment, including prolonged intimidation of the adult by another member of the congregation.	Physical evidence of violence (bruising, broken bones); in constant fear of harm and harassment; significant adaptations to personal activity to avoid situations; stalking; forced marriage/FGM.

Threshold Tool: Rapid Triage Gateway and Matrices

Category	Level One: Does not ordinarily meet safeguarding criterion	Level Two: May meet safeguarding criterion – professional judgement required	Level Three: Clearly indicates safeguarding concern / urgent consideration
Financial/ Material	Legitimate support with finances, access to money or use of a Power of Attorney where arrangements are transparent and there are no indicators of exploitation.	Unwanted cold calling; evidence of development of an online relationship with a person unknown to family, carers or the church community, including early indications of a romance scam. Carer uses persons money/debit cards to purchase necessities for person with transactions/financial activities not recorded safely; carer with POA not always acting in person's best interests; adult with mental capacity not involved in spending decisions; person persuaded to give money for questionable reasons, including sending money or gifts to an online romantic partner or in response to appeals for donations; care fees not being paid by the person managing the adult's finances, with continuity of care beginning to be affected.	Significant impact on lifestyle; significant financial and/or material resources missing/unaccounted for; care fees unpaid causing debt and placing continuity of care at risk or causing it to stop; clear evidence of fraud/misappropriation by any means, including online and romance scams.
Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking	A single nonspecific indicator, such as an unexplained change in accommodation or appearing withdrawn, where there is no further evidence of control or exploitation.	Adult is rarely seen alone and is usually accompanied by the same person, who tends to answer on their behalf; unexplained change of accommodation or "employer"; vague or inconsistent about where they live or work; appears tired, withdrawn or dressed unsuitably for the weather or their work; unfamiliar with the local area despite living there; declines refreshments, practical help or pastoral contact without apparent reason. Identity documents, bank cards or wages held or controlled by another person; adult not permitted to be spoken to alone, or the	Adult is being held, exploited or trafficked for labour, sexual, domestic or criminal purposes; violence, threats or coercion used to secure compliance; immediate referral to the Police and consideration of a National Referral Mechanism referral.

Threshold Tool: Rapid Triage Gateway and Matrices

Category	Level One: Does not ordinarily meet safeguarding criterion	Level Two: May meet safeguarding criterion – professional judgement required	Level Three: Clearly indicates safeguarding concern / urgent consideration
		accompanying person intervenes when contact is attempted; signs of forced, unpaid or excessive labour, or of debt bondage; restricted freedom of movement; adult transported to and from activities and not permitted contact with others; fearful of identifying the person who controls them.	
Neglect & Omission	Isolated shortfall in care with no harm or distress and promptly rectified.	Repeated incidents of neglect/omission; health and wellbeing compromised due to ongoing lack of care; repeated missed health appointments; concerns raised about personal appearance/living environment; adult stops attending church or activities they previously valued, or arrives unwashed, hungry or inadequately dressed for the weather.	Gross neglect; lack of action resulting in serious injury/death; failure to arrange life-saving treatment; dehydration or malnutrition.
Organisational Abuse	Minor or isolated shortfalls in the care or support provided by a care home, supported living setting or church-run activity; organisational routines prioritised over the adult's choices.	Repeated poor practice within a care setting or church-run activity; rigid regimes; restriction of visitors or pastoral contact; concerns about staffing, training, supervision or record-keeping; more than one adult potentially affected.	Systemic or institutional neglect or ill-treatment; unlawful restraint or deprivation of liberty; a culture in which abuse is tolerated or concealed; multiple adults at risk of serious harm. Immediate referral to the local authority and, where a crime is suspected to the police.
Physical Abuse	Accidental or incidental physical contact resulting in no injury or distress and with no concerning context	Unexplained minor marking or grip marks found on multiple occasions; unsatisfactory or confusing explanation of causes; history/pattern of similar concerns.	Significant unexplained injuries; assault; deliberate withholding of food/aids.

Threshold Tool: Rapid Triage Gateway and Matrices

Category	Level One: Does not ordinarily meet safeguarding criterion	Level Two: May meet safeguarding criterion – professional judgement required	Level Three: Clearly indicates safeguarding concern / urgent consideration
Psychological Abuse	Isolated incident of being spoken to rudely; respect undermined but no distress caused; infrequent taunts/ridicule with low impact; occasional instances of others speaking or making minor decisions on the adult's behalf when they retain capacity.	Repeated incidents of abuse/harassment; regular taunts/undermining causing distress; treatment that undermines dignity; withholding information/resources leading to disempowerment; controlling behaviour, such as a relative, carer or fellow member of the congregation making decisions for an adult who still has capacity (for example deciding whether they attend church, who they may speak to, or how their money is spent).	Prolonged intimidation; vicious personalised attacks; "cuckooing"; forced marriage; cyberbullying.
Radicalisation & Extremism (Prevent)	Expression of views or grievances, including controversial views, without evidence of grooming, encouragement of violence or safeguarding risk.	Repeated sharing or promotion of extremist material; hostile or dehumanising statements about another religious or ethnic group; evidence that the adult is being befriended, isolated or groomed by an individual or group promoting extremist views.	Adult expresses an intention to harm another person or group, including intent to kill or injure members of another religion; possession of weapons, attack planning material or reconnaissance of a place of worship.
Self-Neglect	Beginning signs of self-neglect; property neglected but appliances work; may begin to appear unkempt and or lose weight. No/low risk to self or others.	Disengagement and avoidance of professional interventions; lack of essential amenities; hoarding beginning to impact safety; non-compliance with medications.	Living in squalid/unsanitary conditions; structural deterioration of property; appearance of malnourishment; refusal of life-saving treatment.
Sexual Abuse & Activity	A family member, friend, fellow member of the congregation or someone else known to the adult makes/undertakes an inappropriate remark/action that appears on the surface to be naive rather than potentially grooming.	Non-contact sexualised behaviour or teasing/harassment that causes distress.	Rape or sexual assault; grooming / exploitation; sexual activity without valid consent.

Threshold Tool: Rapid Triage Gateway and Matrices

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Matrix 4: Concern or allegation about a Church Officer involving a child or young person

Reference should always be made to the local threshold tool and/or specific LADO criteria within the local authority area where the child resides or is found.

Note: Where the respondent is a Church Officer (e.g. ordained clergy) (Pathway 4A), convening a Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG) is a mandatory requirement under MA Code Requirement 4A.1, not a discretionary step. An SCMG must be convened even where in the judgement of the DSO/CSO the allegation meets the appropriate threshold.

Note: This matrix does not apply to ordinands (those in formation for ordination). Ordinands are supervised by their Theological Education Institution (TEI), which operates its own safeguarding policies. Where a concern arises about an ordinand: (a) the TEI's own safeguarding process applies; (b) the sponsoring diocese must be informed; (c) the DSO in the area where the incident occurred should be notified where there are complainants needing support. Pathway 4B (Lay Volunteers) is the recommended practical framework in the interim (INEQE, 2025).

! Risk can be difficult to establish, and individual indicators do not replace the Safeguarding Officer's professional judgement

Types of Allegation / Criteria	Level One: Does not ordinarily meet safeguarding criterion	Level Two: May meet safeguarding criterion – professional judgement required	Level Three: Clearly indicates safeguarding concern / urgent consideration
Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child	**Emotional:** An officer being unintentionally blunt or appearing impatient during a busy festival.	**Domestic Abuse:** An officer against whom a domestic abuse allegation has been made, where no child was injured or present, or where there are repeated reports of verbal aggression or conflict in a household containing children.	**Domestic Abuse:** A domestic abuse allegation has been made against an officer involving a violent incident where a child was present or injured. **Emotional:** Publicly shaming, ridiculing, or "scapegoating" a child during a sermon or meeting.

	Physical: Accidental contact, such as catching a child who tripped, resulting in no injury. **Physical:** Clumsy handling of a child during a game that causes no pain or marking. **Spiritual:** A clumsily phrased theological point that is not intended to control or coerce.	**Emotional:** Singling a child out in front of peers in a way that embarrasses or potentially belittles them, such as sarcasm, dismissive comments, or using a child's behaviour or family circumstances as an example in a talk or meeting. **Neglect:** Failing to pass on a concern or disclosure through the correct channel. For example, recording it locally, or mentioning it informally to a colleague, but not escalating to the safeguarding lead within the required timeframe. **Neglect:** Poor planning or supervision on a trip. Medication not properly stored, administered, or recorded; medical needs not communicated to leaders; delays in providing food, water, or breaks. **Physical:** Rough handling, such as grabbing, pulling a child by the arm, or pushing them along, used to manage behaviour, causing no injury. **Physical:** Use of restraint that was unnecessary, untrained, or held longer than needed, causing no visible injury, and/or not recorded and reported afterwards. **Spiritual:** Applying pressure on a child to take part in religious practice they are visibly reluctant about (prayer ministry, public commitment, confession), or framing non-participation as a negative, without supporting and/or being seen to respect their personal choice.	**Neglect:** Deliberately withholding food, water, or necessary medical aids (e.g., an inhaler) during a trip. **Neglect:** Intentionally failing to report a disclosure of abuse or neglect by another person. **Physical:** Hitting, shaking, or punching a child during a youth group session. **Physical:** Using excessive force or inappropriate restraint that causes bruises, red marks, or swelling. **Spiritual:** Using religious authority to coerce a child into physical acts of "penance" or rituals that cause pain.

Threshold Tool: Rapid Triage Gateway and Matrices

Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child	**Financial:** A minor administrative error in recording youth expenses with no evidence of personal gain. **Online Harm:** Accidental breach of social media policy, such as failing to copy a second adult on one email. **Sexual:** Discussing healthy relationships in an appropriate, age-graded curriculum.	**Boundaries:** Persistent private contact and preferential with a child, including messaging outside approved channels, lifts alone, gifts, favouritism, or meeting off-site, where policy has been breached but there is no evidence of sexual intent. **Peer-on-peer:** A Church Officer who fails to identify, respond to, or report harmful sexual behaviour, bullying, or coercion between children in a church setting; who minimises it as horseplay or a falling out; or who attempts to resolve it privately between the families rather than reporting it. **Physical:** A single incident of rough handling or physical chastisement without injury, or a leader advocating corporal punishment. **Radicalisation, early stage:** A Church Officer who fails to act on a child expressing sympathy with extremist narratives, or who shares, endorses, or circulates hateful or dehumanising material in a church setting. **Spiritual abuse:** Use of scripture, prayer ministry, deliverance, or teaching on sin and purity to induce fear, shame, or guilt in a child; pressuring a child to confess sexual behaviour to a leader; teaching that discourages a child from seeking help outside the church.	**Breach of a Safety Plan**: A person subject to a formal agreement (following a conviction, caution, or risk assessment) who has unsupervised contact with children. **Harmful practices:** Aiding, abetting, arranging, or concealing a plan to remove a child from the jurisdiction for FGM, forced marriage, or comparable harm. **Neglect**: Gross or criminal negligence during a church-led activity resulting in serious injury or death. **Online harm:** Possession, creation, or distribution of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM). **Radicalisation:** Encouraging or facilitating a child's involvement with a proscribed organisation or inciting a child to commit violence. **Sexual/CSE:** Direct allegation of sexual assault, grooming, or sexual activity with a child.

Threshold Tool: Rapid Triage Gateway and Matrices

		Spiritual abuse: Attributing a child's behaviour, illness, mental health difficulty, or neurodivergence to demonic influence or a curse; praying over a child in ways that frighten them; discouraging a family from medical or psychiatric help. **Spiritual / Deliverance ministry:** Deliverance or exorcism attempted with a child.	**Sexual/Position of Trust**: Sexual activity with a 16- or 17-year-old by a person holding a Position of Trust, including clergy, youth workers, and regular volunteers. **Withhold Information:** A Church Officer who knows of a Level 3 concern and withholds it, delays reporting, or discourages a child or parent from reporting.
Behaved in a way indicating a risk of harm to children	**Bullying:** A volunteer being occasionally firm regarding church rules without being abusive. **Grooming:** Offering a lift home to a child in an emergency, where the act is immediately reported to a lead adult. **Sexual:** A single instance of inappropriate sexualised	**Bullying:** Suspected favouring of a select group of children, including deliberate exclusion, marginalisation or harassment of others within the group. **Domestic abuse:** Suspicion of controlling or intimidating behaviour towards an adult, including repeated unwanted contact, monitoring of movements or uninvited attendance, where children are used as a means of gaining access to the adult, or are likely to be exposed to the behaviour. **Neglect:** Suspected repeated or wilful disregard of safety requirements, including fire procedures, supervision ratios or activity risk assessments.	**Emotional/psychological:** Suspected undermining of a child's account of an incident of abuse, including causing a child to doubt their own memory or fear they will not be believed. **Grooming:** Suspected secret or unauthorised one-to-one contact with a child outside agreed church activity, whether in person or online, including deliberate circumvention of supervision arrangements. **Sexual:** Suspected implicit or explicit sexualised contact with a child, including suspicions of sending sexually suggestive or "flirty" images or messages.

	language used in an adult setting, not heard by a child. **Spiritual:** Expressing a traditional religious view in an appropriate setting that is not forced upon the child.		**Spiritual:** Suspected use of spiritual authority to enforce a child's silence, including suggestions that God will punish a child for disclosing what happens in private meetings.
Behaved in a way indicating unsuitability to work with children	**Emotional:** A volunteer being briefly unable to engage with a child's story due to time constraints. **Grooming:** Showing a general, professional interest in the wellbeing of all youth group members equally. **Online Harm:** Accessing a non-harmful personal site on a church-issued device against policy. **Spiritual:** Leading a prayer session where a child chooses to	**Emotional:** Repeatedly making derogatory or "shaming" comments about a child's family or lifestyle. Escalates to Level 3 where it targets a protected characteristic, is sustained enough to constitute degrading treatment, or is used to separate the child from their family. **Neglect:** Consistently failing to follow lone working protocols, e.g. one to one engagement. Escalates to Level 3 if the officer continues after being challenged or actively conceals or engineers the contact. **Online Harm:** Sending inappropriate (though not sexual) late-night texts to children via private apps. Escalates to Level 3 if the officer asks the child to keep contact secret, deletes messages, moves the child to a more private platform, or the content becomes sexualised or emotionally dependent.	**Grooming:** Giving an individual child excessive "special" attention or expensive gifts to build a bond. **Neglect:** Denying a child access to professional support, such as independent advocacy or medical care. **Spiritual:** Exploiting religious authority to manipulate, isolate, or coerce a child (Spiritual Abuse).

	leave early and is allowed to do so safely.		
Discriminates against a child (Protected Characteristics)	**Bullying:** Ensuring all children follow the same standard rules regardless of background. **Emotional:** An isolated, insensitive remark about a child's culture that is immediately corrected. **Emotional:** Using an outdated term for a disability once, then using the correct term once advised. **Spiritual:** A clumsy explanation of church doctrine regarding other faiths that is not intended to demean.	**Emotional:** Church officer makes racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist or otherwise derogatory remarks directly to a child, or in their hearing about them. **Neglect:** Refusal to make reasonable adjustments for a disabled child e.g. via ramps, hearing loop, quiet space, sensory aids, communication support, adjusted expectations of behaviour in worship. **Spiritual:** Child barred or quietly sidelined from communion, confirmation preparation, choir, servers, youth group or similar because of disability, race, or perceived identity.	**Emotional:** Publicly shaming or "outing" a child regarding their gender identity or sexual orientation. **Spiritual:** Performing or engaging with “conversion” or deliverance and forceful prayer ministry rituals focused on a child’s identity. Including prayer framed as casting out, “healing”, or repentance for identity, whether or not the child appeared to consent.

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Matrix 5: Concern or allegation about a Church Officer involving an adult

This matrix provides illustrative examples to support assessment of concerns or allegations about a Church Officer involving an adult. Where the adult has care and support needs, practitioners should also consider the relevant local authority adult safeguarding and PiPoT arrangements.

Where conduct involving another adult may indicate transferable safeguarding risk or potential unsuitability in relation to vulnerable people, this should be considered in accordance with the *Managing Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations* Code of Practice.
Local authority arrangements and terminology vary. Reference should be made to the relevant local safeguarding procedures where statutory referral may be required.

Note: two distinct 'position of trust' frameworks apply in this matrix and practitioners must distinguish between them:
(a) The Sexual Offences Act 2003 'position of trust' applies where the person at risk is under 18 years of age. The Act was amended in 2022 to extend these provisions to **faith leadership positions**, meaning that a faith leader who engages in sexual activity with a 16- or 17-year-old in their congregation commits a criminal offence regardless of the general age of consent.
(b) The Care Act 2014 'Person in a Position of Trust' (PiPoT) is a distinct concept applying where the person at risk is an adult with care and support needs. These are separate legal frameworks. The appropriate referral pathway (Children's Social Care or Adult Social Care) and the relevant designated officer (Children's LADO, or the SAM / DSAM / PiPoT manager, where available) will depend on which framework applies in the specific case.

! Risk can be difficult to establish, and individual indicators do not replace the Safeguarding Officer's professional judgement

Where the behaviour took place affects the response and the referral pathway, but not whether the matter is in scope.[1]

Examples include, but are not limited to:

[1] Concerns arising in a church context, including church premises, church activities, online church spaces and pastoral visits, engage the Church Safeguarding Pathway directly. Concerns arising wholly outside a church context, such as in the Church Officer's private or family life or in other employment, still fall within this matrix where the behaviour indicates transferable risk to the adults the officer works with.

Threshold Tool: Rapid Triage Gateway and Matrices

Type of Allegation / Criteria	Level One: Does not ordinarily meet safeguarding criterion	Level Two: May meet safeguarding criterion – professional judgement required	Level Three: Clearly indicates safeguarding concern / urgent consideration
Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed an adult at risk.	**Bullying:** A single instance of a volunteer being "short" with an adult during an activity. **Domestic:** An officer engaging in a low-level, non-violent disagreement with a family member at home. **Extra-Familial Harm:** Being unaware of local criminal trends but following standard church safety protocols. **Financial:** A minor administrative error in a lunch club ledger that is transparently corrected. **Neglect:** A one-off, short delay in providing a scheduled meal or drink where no distress is caused / forgetting to bring a specific comfort item (e.g., a cushion) for a parishioner. **Physical:** Accidental bumping into an adult in a crowded hall with no injury. Clumsy assistance that causes no pain or marking.	**Financial:** Repeatedly pressing an adult to increase their giving, or to give beyond their means, including private approaches about tithing, pledges, gifts or legacies. Escalate to Level 3 where spiritual authority, threat or claims of divine instruction are used, or where the adult's essential needs, savings or property are affected. **Financial / Spiritual Abuse:** Coercing or applying heavy spiritual pressure (e.g., claiming "divine instruction" or using threats of spiritual judgement) to pressure an adult into donating money, property, or assets to the church or officer. **Neglect:** Failing to provide necessary personal care, assistance with eating/drinking, or mobility support during a church event, leading to physical distress or basic needs being unmet. **Physical:** Using excessive force or unsafe manual handling when moving an adult with mobility issues during a church activity, resulting in bruising, pain, or distress.	**Domestic Abuse:** A Church Officer being named or involved in a violent domestic abuse incident where an adult at risk is the victim. This applies whether the incident occurred in a church context or wholly outside it, for example in the officer's own home; the location determines the response and referral pathway, not whether the matter is in scope. **Extra-Familial Harm (Cuckooing):** A Church Officer facilitating, enabling, or deliberately ignoring the criminal takeover of a vulnerable adult's home ("cuckooing"), whether the adult is known to the officer through church activity or otherwise. **Extra-Familial Harm (Modern Slavery):** Facilitating, enabling, or benefiting from the forced labour, servitude, or human trafficking of a vulnerable adult. **Financial:** Removing personal finances or access to bank accounts from an adult's control without

	Psychological: A Church Officer being unintentionally blunt or appearing impatient during a busy event. **Spiritual:** A clumsily phrased theological point that is not used to control or coerce.	**Psychological:** Vicious, personalised verbal attacks, belittling, or prolonged intimidation directed at a vulnerable church member.	legal authority (such as a registered Power of Attorney or Deputyship). **Neglect:** Deliberately withholding essential medication, food, or hydration during a church-led event or under church care. **Physical:** Hitting, slapping, punching, or using aggressive physical restraint against an adult during a church lunch club, service, or ministry activity.
Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to an adult at risk.	**Domestic:** A non-criminal family dispute that does not involve the police or safeguarding risks. **Financial:** A delay in processing a reimbursement that is eventually resolved. **Neglect:** An isolated, non-criminal administrative failure that has no impact on safety. **Online:** A minor procedural breach of data protection that results in no risk to the adult. **Online:** Accidentally "liking" a non-harmful but unprofessional post on social media.	**Financial:** Fraud or exploitation relating to the adult's benefits, income, or legal documents. **Financial:** Misappropriation of property or possessions by a Church Officer in a position of control. **Online:** Cyber-fraud or identity theft targeting a vulnerable person's digital accounts. **Sexual:** Sexualised pressure, persistent propositioning, or manipulation of a pastoral or spiritual relationship towards sexual contact, where no contact offence has yet occurred. **Sexual:** Viewing or sharing sexually explicit material with an adult against their will.	**Extra-Familial Harm:** Actively grooming a vulnerable adult to support or participate in violent extremist activities. **Extra-Familial Harm:** Coerced involvement of a vulnerable adult in criminal activity, such as drug storage. **Neglect:** Intentional failure to arrange access to life-saving medical services. **Physical:** Assault causing significant injury or death, including gross negligence in care. **Sexual:** Any contact sexual act without valid consent, including where consent was obtained

	Physical: A Church Officer being present during a public disturbance but not participating. **Sexual:** A Church Officer discussing healthy relationships in an appropriate, professional adult group setting.	**Sexual harassment:** Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature falling short of assault, such as stroking an adult's hair, face or shoulders, standing or leaning unnecessarily close, or persistent, lewd remarks, sexual jokes or comments about an adult's body. Escalate to Level 3 if it involves touching an intimate part of the body, continues after being challenged, or is directed at an adult who lacks capacity to consent.	through coercion, threat, or abuse of spiritual authority. **Sexual:** Deliberate sexual touching of an adult, for example pinching, grabbing or slapping the buttocks, or touching the breasts or genitals, whether over or under clothing. **Sexual:** Engaging in sexual activity with an adult who lacks the mental capacity to consent, or with a person in the Church Officer's care where a mental disorder is present.
Behaved towards an adult in a way indicating they may pose a risk of harm	**Bullying:** A volunteer being occasionally firm regarding church rules without being abusive. **Domestic:** A Church Officer seeking support for their own relationship difficulties from a peer. **Emotional:** An isolated instance of a volunteer appearing distracted while an adult is speaking. **Financial:** Advising a parishioner on general church giving without seeing their personal accounts. **Grooming:** Offering a lift home to a parishioner in an emergency, where the act is immediately reported to a lead.	**Bullying:** Persistent verbal harassment that restricts an adult's personal choice or freedom to express an opinion. Escalate to Level 3 if it involves threats, is repeated after being challenged, or it targets a protected characteristic. **Emotional abuse:** Using emotional blackmail to control an adult's social interactions or church attendance. Escalate to Level 3 if the control extends to finances, housing, medical care, or contact with family and professionals. **Grooming and coercive control:** Early indicators such as offering massage or other unnecessary physical contact, 'love-bombing' through excessive flattery, gifts, messaging or attention, or marked preferential treatment of one adult	**Domestic Abuse:** Stalking or harassing a vulnerable former partner within the church community. **Grooming:** Arranging secret, unauthorised one-to-one visits to a vulnerable person's home. **Neglect:** Repeatedly ignoring safety plans or risk assessments designed to protect a specific adult. **Psychological:** Deliberate isolation of an adult from their family, friends, or statutory support services.

	Neglect: A one-time failure to update a non-critical part of a risk assessment. **Online:** Using a personal phone for church business once because a work device failed. **Psychological:** A Church Officer not being available for a pastoral visit due to illness. **Sexual:** An officer making a single, poorly judged joke in an adult-only setting that is not directed at a vulnerable person. **Spiritual:** Expressing a traditional religious view that is not forced upon the individual.	over others. Indicators should be weighed together rather than dismissed one by one. Escalate to Level 3 where contact becomes secretive or sexualised, or where the adult is being isolated from family, friends or other officers. **Online abuse:** Encouraging a vulnerable person to access harmful websites or engage in risky online behaviour. Escalate to Level 3 if it involves sexual content, self-harm or suicide material, gambling or financial exploitation, radicalisation, or contact with people who pose a risk. **Spiritual:** Using religious authority to tell a person that their disability or illness is a "punishment from God". Escalate to Level 3 if it is used to discourage medical treatment, prescribed medication, or contact with statutory services, or is part of a sustained pattern of coercion.	**Sexual:** Sending unsolicited suggestive or explicit images to an adult with care and support needs.
Behaved in a way indicating they may not be suitable to work with adults at risk	**Bullying:** Correcting a volunteer's mistake in a professional and private manner. **Emotional:** A volunteer being briefly unable to engage with an adult's story due to time constraints. **Financial:** Declining a personal gift from a parishioner in line with church policy.	**Mental Health:** The Church Officer's own significant mental ill-health substantially affecting their ability to carry out their role safely. **Neglect:** Consistently unhygienic practice, or failure to maintain a safe environment during church activities. **Neglect:** Denying an adult at risk access to professional support, such as independent advocacy.	**Emotional / organisational:** Treatment that systematically undermines the dignity and self-esteem of a group of adults. **Financial:** A Church Officer personally benefiting from the support they offer in a way that is exploitative.

	Grooming: Showing a general interest in the wellbeing of all congregation members equally. **Mental Health:** An officer taking a leave of absence to manage their own mental health responsibly. **Neglect:** A one-time failure to notice a parishioner's minor clothing disarray (e.g., untied lace). **Online:** Accessing a shopping site on a church-issued device against policy. **Physical:** An officer being clumsy with church equipment but causing no risk to people. **Procedural:** A Church Officer forgetting a sign-in sheet for a low-risk coffee morning. **Spiritual:** Leading a prayer session where an adult chooses to leave early.	**Neglect:** Failing to report a disclosure of abuse or neglect made about another person. **Unsuitability:** A history of punitive responses towards adults with behaviour that challenges. **Unsuitability:** Conduct arising wholly outside the church context that indicates transferable risk in the church role, for example a domestic abuse finding, dismissal or resignation from other employment for safeguarding reasons, or a police caution or conviction.	**Grooming:** Building an exclusive, secretive bond with an adult at risk through excessive "special" attention, favouritism, or gifts. **Procedural:** Wilfully failing to adhere to the Mental Capacity Act 2005 when involved in decisions affecting others. **Sexual:** Sexual activity within a relationship characterised by authority, inequality, or exploitation.
Behaved or may have behaved in a manner that discriminates against an adult (Protected Characteristics)	**Bullying:** Ensuring all members follow the same set of rules regardless of background. **Discriminatory:** A clumsy but well-meaning question about an adult's cultural background or traditions.	**Discriminatory:** Failure to meet an adult's specific care or support needs associated with a protected characteristic (culture, faith, disability, communication), causing distress. **Discriminatory:** Witnessed racist, homophobic, or derogatory remarks made directly to an adult at risk.	**Bullying:** Encouraging or orchestrating others in the congregation to mock, ostracise or harass an adult because of their ethnic background. **Discriminatory:** Humiliation or threats motivated by prejudice against the adult's disability or age.

	Emotional: A Church Officer not knowing a parishioner's preferred pronouns but using them once informed. **Emotional:** Using an outdated term for a disability once, then correcting it immediately when advised. **Exclusion:** A popular church group being full and unable to take new members. **Psychological:** An officer feeling nervous when speaking to someone of a different background but remaining polite. **Spiritual:** Discussing different faith perspectives without demeaning the individual. **Spiritual:** Leading a service in a traditional style that some find not to be inclusive but is not abusive.	**Exclusion:** Refusing to make reasonable adjustments, such as sensory aids, physical access or accessible communication, for an adult with a disability. **Psychological:** Systematic exclusion of an adult from leadership or service roles on the basis of a protected characteristic, where no lawful occupational requirement applies.	**Psychological:** Publicly shaming an adult in relation to their gender reassignment or sexual orientation, including disclosing this without consent. **Spiritual:** Compelling an adult to participate in activities inappropriate to their faith or beliefs, for example coerced deliverance ministry, prayer for "healing" of identity, or conversion practices. **Spiritual:** Using religious teachings to justify the ill-treatment of an individual based on their identity.

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Matrix 6: Spiritual Abuse

Spiritual abuse is a critical issue within faith-based environments. Rather than being a distinct category of abuse, it is a specific form of psychological and emotional abuse that occurs in a religious context. When discussing these cases with statutory agencies, it is vital to clearly frame the abuse in these psychological and emotional terms to ensure it is properly understood and addressed.

For more information read House of Bishops' Safeguarding Guidance: Safeguarding in the Church Guidance, Section 4.2 Spiritual Abuse

Spiritual abuse should be considered through the relevant child or adult safeguarding route. These examples are intended to support professional judgement about whether the use of religious authority, belief or practice may amount to psychological or emotional abuse.

Category	Level One: Does not ordinarily meet safeguarding criterion	Level Two: May meet safeguarding criterion – professional judgement required	Level Three: Clearly indicates safeguarding concern / urgent consideration
Authority & Power	• A volunteer being occasionally firm or "short" regarding church rules without being abusive. • Occasionally framing a request in overly spiritual terms ("I've prayed about it and this is what should happen") without intending to close down discussion. • Becoming defensive on one occasion when a decision or interpretation is questioned.	• Creating a secretive "inner circle" that systematically excludes and shames others as being "unfaithful". • Repeatedly using religious language to elevate their own authority or implying that disagreement with them weakens the church. • Presenting their role or decisions as effectively unchallengeable because of their calling, anointing or office. • Establishing an expectation of accountability that the person did not freely agree to and cannot renegotiate or step away from.	• Using religious status to tell a child or adult that "God will punish them" if they disclose something. • A sustained pattern in which a person's fear of disobeying God is used to secure compliance, so that they no longer feel free to refuse, i.e. consent is no longer freely given. • Requiring obedience to the leader with the explicit or implicit message that this is obedience to God, to the point where the person believes non-compliance places their salvation or standing before God at risk. • Framing non-compliance as disobedience to God or as evidence of a defective faith, so that meaningful freedom of decision is removed.

Threshold Tool: Rapid Triage Gateway and Matrices

		• A pattern of requiring a degree of commitment, deference or availability from one person that exceeds what is asked of others.	• Presenting themselves as appointed or anointed by God and therefore beyond question and using this to require obedience from a child or an adult at risk.
Doctrine & Teaching	• A clumsily phrased theological point not intended to control or coerce. • Leading a service in a traditional style that some find non-inclusive but is not abusive. • Occasionally framing guidance in overly spiritual terms or implying disappointment when a person struggles. • Being overly defensive when speaking to someone who holds a different view on, for example, tithing.	• Telling a person their disability, illness, infertility or mental ill health is a "punishment from God", or evidence of insufficient faith, in order to influence their behaviour. • Using "emotional blackmail" based on faith to control an adult's social interactions, friendships or family contact. • Selecting Bible passages to imply that a person should prioritise the group or the leader over other commitments, family, work, study or rest. • A pattern of implying that stepping back, declining or setting a boundary reflects weak or inadequate faith. • Suggesting to a young person that their difficulties stem from a spiritual flaw that needs correcting.	• Using scripture to justify physical ill-treatment, "discipline" or "penance" that causes pain, injury or fear. • Persistently using scripture, God's name or threats of spiritual consequence (judgement, loss of salvation) to coerce behaviour, where the person is afraid to refuse. • Attributing a child's or adult's distress, mental illness, neurodivergence, trauma or disability to demonic influence or personal sin, and directing them to prayer or "healing" instead of medical or professional help. • Instructing or pressuring a person to stop medication, treatment or therapy, or to withhold it from a child, on the grounds that faith makes it unnecessary. • Teaching a child or adult at risk that they must submit to a named individual, or that disobedience or disclosure will separate them from God.
Secrecy & Reporting	• Failing to report a disclosure due to a lack of understanding of policy or procedure.	• A pattern of defensive or aggressive responses to any question or challenge about conduct, safeguarding or church practice.	• Coercing a victim to keep quiet about harm by telling them that reporting is a "sin" or "spiritually dangerous". • Using "gaslighting" to make a child doubt their memory of an incident by claiming it was a "spiritual experience".

Threshold Tool: Rapid Triage Gateway and Matrices

	• An isolated administrative failure in recording an incident that has no immediate impact on safety. • Asking on one occasion that a difficult conversation be kept "in-house", without appreciating how that might be perceived. • Not actively listening to a concern that has been raised.	• Creating a culture in which raising a concern is treated as disloyalty or a threat to unity, or in which the person raising an issue is regularly said to be the issue. • Discouraging a child or adult from telling parents, carers or the Parish Safeguarding Officer what happens in the group, framed as keeping things "within the church family". • Repeatedly delaying, filtering or reframing a concern before it reaches the PSO or DSO. • Pressing someone to "forgive and move on", or invoking Matthew 18, so that a concern is not reported.	• Telling a person that disclosing abuse would damage God's work, destroy the church, or bring judgement on them or their family. • Requiring a person to confess a disclosure to, or be reconciled with, the person they say has harmed them. • Deliberately concealing, destroying or withholding information from the DSO, statutory agencies or the police, using a spiritual or theological rationale.
Inclusion & Identity	• Using an outdated term for a disability once, then correcting it immediately when advised. • A clumsy but well-meaning question about an adult's cultural background. • A group being full and unable to take new members for logistical reasons.	• Publicly shaming or "outing" someone regarding their gender identity, sexuality, marital status or personal circumstances during a sermon or meeting. • Refusing sacraments, roles or participation specifically to humiliate an individual, or on the basis of a protected characteristic (also an Equality Act 2010 issue).	• Performing unauthorised "conversion", "deliverance" or "exorcism" rituals focused on a person's identity, sexuality, illness or behaviour (see Section 4.1 Deliverance Ministry requires the bishop's authorisation). • Making a young person believe there is something spiritually wrong with them and insisting they obey the leader's instructions to receive "healing" or to be allowed on an upcoming trip. • Using implied spiritual threat or conditional acceptance to control a child's behaviour or decisions.

		• Withdrawing roles, invitations, welcome or friendship as a punishment for non-conformity or for raising a concern. • Repeatedly holding an individual up in front of the congregation or group as an example of failure, sin or rebellion.	• Systematically isolating or shunning a child or adult at risk from the congregation, their peer group or their family as punishment for non-compliance. • Public shaming or humiliation used repeatedly to control a child or adult at risk, where there are signs of resulting distress, self-harm or suicidal ideation.
Pastoral Boundaries, Mentoring & Dependency	• Offering a lift home to a parishioner in an emergency and reporting it immediately to a lead adult. • Showing a general, professional interest in the wellbeing of all congregation members equally. • A Church Officer not being available for a pastoral visit due to their own illness. • Being a little too directive in one mentorship conversation. • Being overly defensive when one piece of advice is disagreed with or ignored.	• Arranging secret, unauthorised one-to-one visits to a vulnerable person's home. • Building an exclusive, secretive bond by giving an individual "special" gifts or status to foster spiritual dependency. • Requiring the individual to share personal details which they do not wish to share, or going beyond agreed boundaries. • Exploring and interpreting personal psychological history to a depth only appropriate to a trained counsellor or psychotherapist. • Spiritual mentorship or support becoming very directive and difficult to disagree with or not comply with. • Requiring accountability on prayer, giving, relationships, sexual behaviour or finances, without	• Deliberately isolating an adult from their family or statutory support services for "spiritual" reasons. • A consistent pattern of highly controlling and directive mentorship in which the person feels unable or afraid to disagree with any advice given. • Using God's name to enforce actions the mentor recommends, including decisions about relationships, marriage, employment, housing, money or medical care. • Presenting oneself as akin to a professional counsellor, anointed by God for this role, with equivalent skills and competencies. • Secrecy, "special" status, gifts and isolation combining into a pattern consistent with the grooming of a child or adult at risk. • Spiritual authority used to obtain, or attempt to obtain, sexual contact or compliance (consider Sexual Offences Act

		free consent or the ability to set and renegotiate boundaries.	2003, abuse of position of trust; offences against persons unable to refuse).
Money, Giving & Material Resources	• Suggesting that most people could give more if they managed their finances more effectively. • Being overly defensive when speaking to someone who has a different opinion to you on tithing.	• Pressuring individuals or groups into financial giving. • Giving more attention, access or standing to individuals who are able to give financially. • Developing a pattern of defensive and critical conversations with individuals who are unable to give financially. • Linking a person's level of giving to their spiritual maturity, their standing in the church, or their access to roles. • Becoming involved in a person's private finances, accounts, benefits, debts, beyond any agreed and recorded role.	• Consistent, intrusive, coercive requests for financial giving, suggesting that the level of giving is the most important measure of the individual's commitment to God. • Using biblical scripture to persistently coerce financial giving or using threats of spiritual consequences to invoke fear if finance is not provided. • Applying "divine" pressure to force an adult to donate money, lend, transfer assets, take on debt or change their will. • Obtaining money, property or a legacy from a person who may lack capacity, or who is dependent on the person concerned (consider Mental Capacity Act 2005; Fraud Act 2006 s.4; undue influence). • Financial expectations that leave a person or family unable to meet essential living costs.
Service, Workload & Consent	• Occasionally urging a volunteer to take on an additional duty without checking capacity. • Suggesting disappointment when someone declines involvement.	• Regularly implying that "service" requires significant sacrifice and that stepping back signals weak commitment. • Increasing volunteer responsibilities without consent or ignoring their stated limits.	• Consistently using passages of scripture, for example on servant leadership, to control and undermine a member of clergy, and to exploit them by demanding excessive working hours with the rhetoric that this is required by God.

	• Scheduling a regular meeting on a day that should be a clergy member's day off. • Becoming defensive if someone questions an interpretation or declines an activity. • Occasionally applying pressure for members to stay longer than agreed or to take on tasks without checking capacity.	• Allowing expectations to form where members regularly complete domestic tasks for the host or leader without clear consent or shared agreement. • Developing a pattern of emotional pressure suggesting that stepping back from tasks might reflect a weak or inadequate faith. • Persistently undermining a member of clergy, privately and publicly, including commenting on their working hours as a means of undermining them.	• Using Bible verses or spiritual language to manipulate a volunteer into giving more time or taking on responsibilities beyond what they can reasonably manage. • Consistently using scripture, Christian values, God's name or implied spiritual consequences to coerce members into carrying out housework or other personal tasks for the leader or host. • Making individuals feel fearful that refusing such tasks could damage their relationship with God or place them at spiritual risk.
Challenge, Dissent & Governance	• Showing frustration when someone asks for additional information or clarity about an issue in the context of faith. • Implied pressure to "go along with the group".	• Subtly using religious language to elevate the Church Officer's authority, or to imply that disagreement weakens the church. • Creating a culture in which challenge and questioning are seen as threatening unity. • Developing a pattern of defensive and aggressive responses to any question or challenge. • Using prayer, prophecy or "a word from God" to close down a discussion.	• Using scripture over time to create deference and to ensure a individual feels spiritually obliged to vote in the way the Church Officer instructs. • Framing dissent as a failure of faith or obedience to God, thereby removing meaningful freedom of decision. • A consistent pattern of controlling behaviour suggesting that questioning or challenge is an inability to be obedient to God, and a reflection of a problematic personal faith. • Seeking to use Scripture or spiritual threats to close down discussion or silence an individual rather than to engage with the issues they are raising.

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Appendix: Navigating Boundaries: Spiritual Abuse, and HR/Conduct Issues

This appendix provides supplementary guidance for practitioners using this threshold tool in two areas where the boundary between safeguarding, conduct management, and HR processes may be unclear. It addresses: (a) when spiritual abuse escalates into a formal safeguarding concern; and (b) when an HR or conduct matter becomes a safeguarding concern.

Section A: Spiritual Abuse and Safeguarding: Understanding the Boundary

A.1 Adopted Definition of Spiritual Abuse

The Church of England recognises spiritual abuse as a distinct form of harm. It is defined as a form of emotional and psychological abuse characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context. It occurs when a person in religious authority (or a fellow congregant) uses aspects of faith, scripture, belief, or religious practice to manipulate, control, coerce, or silence another person, causing significant harm to their spiritual, emotional, psychological, or physical wellbeing.

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Spiritual abuse may be directed at adults and children alike. It is a recognised category of harm that is separate from, but frequently overlaps with, emotional, psychological, financial, and physical abuse.

A.2 The Three-Zone Boundary Framework

Not every theological difficulty, pastoral insensitivity, or exercise of religious authority constitutes spiritual abuse, and not all spiritual abuse automatically meets the threshold for a formal safeguarding response. Practitioners should map the presenting concern against the following three zones:

Zone	Characteristics	Primary Response
Zone 1 **Legitimate Pastoral / Theological Practice**	Expression of traditional religious views in an appropriate, non-coercive context; gentle challenge within agreed Church frameworks; teaching that some may find difficult, but which does not coerce or manipulate.	No safeguarding action required. A pastoral conversation may be appropriate where a concern is raised.
Zone 2 **Poor Conduct / Spiritual Insensitivity**	Clumsily phrased doctrine; unintentional use of language that undermines dignity; isolated failure to respect an individual's spiritual autonomy; pastoral relationships lacking appropriate boundaries but without systematic coercion or identifiable harm.	HR / Conduct pathway or pastoral support. Not ordinarily a safeguarding referral, but practitioners should remain alert to whether a pattern is developing.

Zone 3 **Spiritual Abuse: Safeguarding Concern**	Systematic use of religious authority to control, manipulate, isolate, or silence; use of scripture or theology to justify or conceal physical harm; coercing financial decisions through 'divine' pressure; using religious authority to prevent disclosure of abuse.	Safeguarding pathway triggered. Apply Matrix 6 and the Decision Triage Tool. Consider statutory referral if the harm threshold is met.

Section B: HR/Conduct Issues and Safeguarding: When Does One Become the Other?

B.1 The Core Distinction

HR and conduct processes address how a Church Officer behaves in their role: their professionalism, compliance with policy, and fitness to hold their position. Safeguarding addresses harm to, or the risk of harm to, a child or adult. These are separate frameworks, but they are not mutually exclusive: the same set of facts may engage both concurrently.

The critical question is always: does this conduct involve, or reveal, a risk of harm to a child or adult?

B.2 Escalation Triggers: When an HR / Conduct Matter Becomes Safeguarding

Examples of when an HR or conduct matter crosses into safeguarding territory include, but are not limited to, the presence of one or more of the following triggers:

Trigger	Example	Response
The conduct has caused actual harm to a child or adult	Poor supervision results in a child being left alone with a known risk individual; an officer's rough handling of a frail adult causes a fall and injury	Safeguarding pathway triggered alongside any HR action. Refer to Matrix 4 or 5 as appropriate.

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The conduct reveals a pattern of risk behaviour, even without a single serious incident	Consistent violation of two-adult protocols; repeated inappropriate physical contact described as accidental; a series of minor boundary breaches that individually appear low-risk	Safeguarding pathway triggered. LADO referral (children or adults) may be required. Carefully document the pattern before escalating.
The conduct involves an abuse of power or position of trust over a child or adult	A Church Officer using pastoral authority to gain inappropriate access to a vulnerable person's personal affairs, finances, or home	Safeguarding pathway triggered. Matrices 4 or 5 apply. LADO referral to be considered.
The conduct involves a criminal offence against a person	Fraud targeting a vulnerable parishioner; possession of indecent images of children discovered on a church device; sexual assault outside the Church	Safeguarding pathway triggered. Immediate police referral. LADO referral required.
The conduct occurs outside the Church but is relevant to the Church Officer's suitability to work with children or adults	A domestic abuse conviction; a caution for a sexual offence discovered at DBS renewal; evidence of grooming behaviour in a personal relationship	Safeguarding pathway triggered. LADO referral required. Off-duty conduct does not displace the safeguarding response where suitability is in question.
The conduct amounts to discriminatory abuse on the basis of protected characteristics causing identifiable harm	Systematic exclusion or public humiliation of a disabled, LGBTQ+, or Black, Asian, or minority ethnic member of the congregation	Safeguarding pathway triggered. Matrices 4 / 5 (discrimination criteria) apply.
The conduct involves persistent interpersonal conflict, micro-management, or disrespectful behaviour that impacts	A team leader regularly cutting across a volunteer in meetings, making passive-aggressive remarks about a colleague's performance, or routinely leaving a specific team member out of casual social invitations.	While commonly reported, this level of conduct is normally best dealt with under Dignity in Ministry or Anti-bullying policies rather than safeguarding procedures, as it represents

morale but does not pose a direct safeguarding risk to a child or adult at risk.		a breach of behavioural standards rather than a safeguarding issue.

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