

Section 3 - Safer Recruitment and People Management

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Requirements

Employees/Volunteers

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

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

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

3.2 Joining a recognised community:

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

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

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

3.3 Joining an acknowledged community:

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

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

3.4 Trustees:

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

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

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

Good practice advice

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

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

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

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

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

Creating a healthy culture

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

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

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

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

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

This document is version 1 and was printed on 09 June 2023. The most up to date version of this policy can be found on the Church of England website: <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding>

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