

Section 5 - Safeguarding yourself and your community

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Requirements

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

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

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

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

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

Good practice advice

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

Safeguarding members at premises

Those communities which have visitors come to their property, or a property they use for the purpose of delivering a service, should ensure that visitor details are kept (in line with GDPR and Data Protection guidelines).¹ This is in case of any issues which may arise as a result of their visit, which would require you to either contact them directly, or to pass their details onto a statutory agency.² In some circumstances this could simply be name and contact details, in others more information may be required, including for example, emergency contact details, proof of identity and even a very basic risk assessment.³ This requires a privacy notice to be in place, please refer to the main Safeguarding Children, Vulnerable People and Adults policy for more information. Where possible, it is recommended that a reference from someone in a position of authority is sought. It must never be forgotten that someone who visits a community in whatever capacity may do so to cause harm to others, and communities need to satisfy themselves that they and their other visitors are protected.⁴ This is particularly the case where vulnerable people may be part of the community for either a permanent or interim period of time, as there needs to be a clearly understood plan for ensuring their safety.⁵ The scope and size of these measures will depend entirely on the particular work the community does, and advice from the DSA should be sought where necessary.⁶

Safeguarding members in the community

Members of communities who work with children or vulnerable adults in the community should already be safely recruited and should be involved in regular supervision discussions.⁷ ⁸ For those members, and for all other members who work in the community, there should also be clear processes to safeguard them as well as those they work with.⁹ This will include, as a minimum, details of where the member will be working, who with and how long for.¹⁰ In certain circumstances, it may be necessary to carry out a risk assessment of the environment members will be working in, and ensure basic mitigations are taken, e.g. two people together, telephones etc. The Safer Environments and Activities policy and the Code of Safer Working Practice both have more information on this. ¹¹

Safeguarding buildings and activities

The DSP should work with others to ensure that a basic risk assessment of any premises owned or used is carried out in relation to safeguarding.¹² This is in addition to any health and safety risk assessments which must be completed.¹³ This will identify any areas of concern, for example, unsecure or hidden entrances, basic security measures on doors and windows, areas of low lighting, placement and security of toilets etc. Steps can then be taken to mitigate the risks posed by the building itself.¹⁴ If they are not already been carried out, risk assessments of the activities being carried out should also be completed, again so that the risk of any safeguarding incident arising is mitigated as far as possible.¹⁵ The [Safer Environments and Activities policy](#), and the [Code of Safer Working Practices](#) both have more information on this and model risk assessment templates are also available.

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This document is version 1 and was printed on 06 October 2022. 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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