

Introduction

3 minutes read

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Version: 1

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

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

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

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

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

Scope

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

Definitions

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

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

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

community.

Related policies

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

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

Review

This policy will be reviewed no later than November 2022.

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual/safeguarding-religious-communities/introduction>