



# I'M A CHURCH SAFEGUARDING COORDINATOR

## what next...?

Although **safeguarding is everybody's business** and it's true that we all have a responsibility to help safeguard children and adults at risk, the most effective way to ensure that the church is fulfilling its safeguarding responsibilities and following the safeguarding policy is to have a named **safeguarding coordinator**.

Places of worship are open to all and this can have additional safeguarding implications so it is important that we take every measure to safeguard everyone we work with, who attends our place of worship as well as our workers and volunteers.

As the **safeguarding coordinator** your role is crucial in making your church a safer place for all. Hopefully, this leaflet will help you to understand your role and the tasks that lie ahead.

### **YOU'RE NOT ON YOUR OWN**

You may be called a safeguarding lead / coordinator / trustee or officer but whatever title your church uses please remember that you are not on your own. It is essential that you feel supported in your role by the church leaders and that they demonstrate a clear commitment to safeguarding vulnerable groups. The leadership should understand the safeguarding policy, be willing to follow it and lead by example.

Your role should not be a burden! You are not expected to be an expert in child or adult protection and you should never be expected to make major safeguarding decisions or assessments on your own. Similarly church leaders should never try to deal with safeguarding issues independently. It is not the role of the church or the local safeguarding person to make final decisions regarding safeguarding incidents or disclosures.

The Interdenominational Safeguarding Panel supports the Presbyterian Church of Wales, the Union of Welsh Independents and the Baptist Union of Wales on safeguarding matters including, policy, cases and concerns and DBS checks. The Panel Safeguarding Officer is the safeguarding lead for these 3 denominations.

As your place of worship is part of a denomination that forms the Safeguarding Panel you will work closely with the Panel officers to help you to help you to make your church is a safer place for all. Read on for more details of the role. It will vary from church to church, depending on church activities but it is likely to include - ensuring that anyone who needs to do a DBS check has done this and you could be the first point of contact if there are any local safeguarding concerns. The panel officers, Sian and Julie, are here to help and advise you and will support you through any safeguarding steps that you should take.

### **TRAINING**

The Interdenominational Safeguarding Panel provides safeguarding training for volunteers (level 1) and ministers and staff (level 2) as well as a new 3 hour course to help you as a coordinator to understand your responsibilities. We also provide training for those who check and verify DBS forms.

You can access any of this training as a coordinator and information is on the Panel website. It is also important that you encourage local volunteers to attend appropriate training at least every 4 years. All levels of training will include the following elements, but the emphasis will vary depending on the course.

1. Your church safeguarding policy and guidelines.
2. Safer recruitment and good practice
3. The signs and indicators of abuse and neglect and how to respond to concerns.
4. Where to find more information and support

## WHAT DOES MY ROLE INVOLVE?

If you have additional safeguarding roles or positions in your church such as safeguarding trustee or DBS coordinator, some of these elements may be carried out by others. There is a summary of these roles in the notes of the of the safeguarding policy statement <https://panel.cymru/en/policies-and-information>

### **GOLDEN RULE: NEVER BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP OR ADVICE!**

#### **POLICY:**

1. Familiarise yourself with your safeguarding policy and guidance. The panel website is full of useful information to help you to carry out your role. <https://panel.cymru/en/>
2. The [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Handbook](#) forms the safeguarding policy and procedures for churches from the Union of Welsh Independents, Baptist Union of Wales and the Presbyterian Church of Wales. It includes good practice guidelines on working with children and vulnerable adults including safer recruitment and DBS and outlines what to do if you have a concern about an individual or situation.
3. Keep the safeguarding policy up to date and ensure that all relevant people know about it and have access to it.
4. Ensure that the policy statement is displayed and updated with relevant contact details.
5. Make sure that safeguarding is on the agenda at church meetings but you should be supported in your role by the church leaders and trustees.

#### **SAFER RECRUITMENT AND DBS CHECKS:**

1. Promote the safer recruitment process. *Information about this is in Section 2 of the Handbook or online.* <https://panel.cymru/en/recruiting-volunteers>
2. Make sure that all relevant and [eligible persons](#) working with children and adults at risk have an up to date (4 yearly) DBS check. *See endnotes<sup>i</sup>, section 2 of the Handbook or online for more details.*
3. You may be asked to act as the ID verifier for DBS checks.
4. Make sure volunteers have attended safeguarding training. <https://panel.cymru/en/training>
5. Make sure volunteers have read and understood the safeguarding code of conduct. ([appendix 2a](#) in the Handbook)
6. Seek advice when needed and liaise with the Panel office on DBS matters.

#### **RECORDS:**

1. Receive notifications of completed DBS checks from the Panel.
2. Maintain confidential record of all volunteers working with children, young people and vulnerable adults noting dates of DBS checks and training attended and ensure renewals are completed.
3. Make sure any safeguarding contracts are kept securely and monitored appropriately.

#### **SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS AND ALLEGATIONS:** see endnotes for more details<sup>ii</sup>

1. Receive and respond to concerns/ disclosures and allegations that are shared with you by an individual suffering abuse or by a third party. Make careful notes of conversations and/ or concerns.
2. In an emergency, if there is a concern for a child or adults' immediate safety out of hours or they are afraid to return home contact Social Services or Police.
3. Contact the Panel Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible for advice and support and report all safeguarding matters to the Panel.
4. Liaise with the panel safeguarding officer to make referrals to social services and cooperate with statutory services as necessary.
5. DO NOT investigate any allegations or concerns. Seek advice.

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## NOTES

**i DBS ELIGIBILITY** Most direct roles working with children will be eligible for a DBS check as well as roles working frequently (i.e., weekly) with adults who a statutory service would class as at risk or vulnerable. For those who are eligible, checks should be done before people start working with vulnerable groups and then every 4 years.

If there are no specific activities with children or vulnerable adults in a church, there is no eligibility to do a DBS check. The [eligibility flow charts](#) will help you to be sure and this is explained in detail in the handbook. but you can always ask if you are unsure. We can't do checks just in case or for every elder or deacon unless their activities or the church's activities meet the DBS strict criteria.

You are always welcome to contact the Panel office with any questions or queries and remember section 2 of the Handbook and the website has lots more information.

### ii . INITIAL RESPONSE TO A CONCERN OR ALLEGATION

If there is concern that a child, young person or vulnerable adult may have been abused, or an allegation of abuse has been made, it is important the person receiving this information does the following:

#### 1) Make notes as soon as possible:

- Write down exactly what has been said, when, what was said in reply and a description of any activity. Keep it factual and do not express your opinion. Your notes could be used later in a court of law (There is a form you can use - [Form 11](#) in section 7 of the Handbook also available online ([panel.cymru](#)) Keep all handwritten notes, even if subsequently typed up.
- Describe any injury: its size and a drawing of its location and shape on the child's body.
- If you have a church safeguarding co-ordinator pass these notes on to them to assist them should the matter need to be referred to Children's Social Services or the Police. Otherwise see 2) below or go straight to Social Services. Any referral should be confirmed in writing within 48 hours and you should expect an acknowledgement of your written referral within one working day of receiving it.

#### 2) Seek advice:

Contact the Panel Safeguarding Officer (01745 817584/07957510346- not 24hours) or the General Secretary of your denomination for advice. Thirtyone:eight (03030031111); NSPCC (0808 80005000) and Hourglass– previously Action for Elder Abuse (08088088141) can also offer independent advice. Further points of contact on the website <https://panel.cymru/en/advice-and-support>

#### 3) In urgent cases:

If there are concerns that someone may have been deliberately hurt, is at risk of 'significant harm' or is afraid to return home, contact your local Social Services department or the police straight away. Do not tell the parents/carers in such circumstances.

If urgent medical attention is needed, an ambulance should be called or they should be taken to hospital.

**4) DO NOT:** Investigate any circumstances, assertions or disclosures yourself. It is not your role or that of the church to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. Your responsibility is to report the matter to the appropriate person.

#### 5) Concerns about possible poor parenting or neglect (Children)

If the concerns for a child centre around poor parenting, it may be appropriate to speak to the parent/carer. You could offer practical domestic help and suggest, for example, a chat with the health visitor, doctor or Children's Social Services.

If a parent/carer is unwilling or frightened to seek help, then offer to accompany them. If they still fail to acknowledge the need for action, it is possible to informally discuss the situation with Children's Social Services without divulging their personal details (such as names and addresses) unless, of course, social services instruct you otherwise.

**PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT ALL CONCERNS OR SAFEGUARDING INCIDENTS ARE REPORTED TO THE PANEL SAFEGUARDING OFFICER STRAIGHT AWAY**