



Bringing people closer to Jesus Christ through His Church
Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
Registered Charity no. 1199568

Policy and Practice Guidance

Safer Recruitment.

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For review – July 2023



Safer Recruitment Policy

As a Regulated Affiliate of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA), the Diocese adheres to the national policies and practice guidance as defined by the 'One Church' approach.

Our safeguarding services and functions are administered in accordance with the agreed national safeguarding standards which provide the framework for safeguarding activities across the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

As part of its commitment to ensuring that children, young people and adults are kept safe from harm, the Catholic Church in England and Wales will apply robust selection and appointment processes to anybody who is applying to work or minister within the Church in a role which gives them direct access to children or adults at risk or who may be otherwise vulnerable.

Reliance on a practice of untested trust is insufficient and Church bodies must adhere to the highest standards of practice and public accountability, while continuing to foster a spirit of trust and openness that reflects the values of the Church.

As part of the recruitment process, an application or personal details form must be completed by all those seeking to work with children and adults at risk or who may be otherwise vulnerable, and two references (including the current employer for paid positions) must be sought and provided.

For paid posts, a formal interview must be conducted and for unpaid posts, the prospective volunteer must participate in a formal discussion.

Roles working or ministering directly with children and adults at risk or may be otherwise vulnerable, will be checked for eligibility for a DBS Disclosure, and where eligible the Disclosure Certificate must be obtained before the person commences in role.

Anyone who is seeking to work with children or adults whether in a paid or unpaid capacity must be provided with the opportunity to self-disclose relevant conviction information.

For volunteers, relevant convictions will not need to be disclosed in advance or during the formal discussion about the role but must be discussed with the volunteer applicant before a decision about appointment is made.

The church body must satisfy itself that the paid or voluntary appointee is legally entitled to work in the UK.



Safer Recruitment Practice Guidance.

Recruitment, selection, and appointment procedure for clergy, religious, employees and volunteers.

Pre-recruitment preparation

The case for the new appointment, the position of the appointment within existing structures and where appropriate, provision of supervision and management of the role should be clarified.

The Head of Safeguarding should be consulted about recruitment to the post to determine whether an Enhanced DBS Disclosure/Barred list check will be required, and to ensure that other safeguarding considerations are taken into account at an early stage.

Job/role description and person specification.

A job or role description¹ and person specification for the role must be developed and formal, detailed job descriptions drawn up for paid appointments by the employing body.

The job or role description should include:

- A detailed description of the work that reflects the specific nature of the role and the specific aspect of the role that justifies the requirement for a DBS Disclosure (where appropriate).
- A list of responsibilities, including the responsibility to become familiar with the National Safeguarding Policies and Procedures.
- The duty to promote safe practice, minimise all risks of abuse and take action to report concerns and/or allegations.

Application or 'personal details form'.

An application or personal details form must be completed by all those seeking to work with children and adults at risk. Template application forms and reference requests are contained within the Forms Library.²

However, to ensure that application forms are compliant with employment law and other relevant legislation, advice should be sought from HR departments.

¹ Job descriptions should be reviewed annually or at an agreed interval to ensure that they continue to reflect the work being undertaken.

² The standard forms and form templates contained in this Chapter can only be amended to allow for Diocesan or Religious Congregation logos. If you wish to consider amending the content or structure of any of the documents, you must seek approval from CSSA (as the Registered Body) prior to use.

The application or personal details form should also:

State whether or not the role will require a DBS Disclosure and if so, when sending out the application form, include the [Policy Statement on the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders](#) or signpost the applicant to it.

Request the names and contact details of a minimum of two referees (including the current employer for paid positions) and ask whether references can be taken up before interview. Applicants must seek permission from referees in advance of providing their contact information for the purpose of providing a reference.

State that identity will be verified and whether this is to be done at interview, following an offer of appointment or, for eligible roles, as part of the DBS application process.

State that where required for certain positions, there will be a requirement to disclose and discuss relevant convictions at interview or another agreed time after interview. The applicant should not be required to disclose relevant convictions in advance of being offered an interview or formal discussion to assess their suitability for the role.

State that the National Database will be checked in respect of all applicants before any offer of appointment is confirmed.

Advertising or making the vacancy or position known.

Advertise the post or make the position known, noting where required for certain roles, the requirement for a DBS check.

If someone comes forward independently and offers unsolicited services, the requirement for the following safeguarding checks must be made known as soon as possible:

- Verification of Identity - [see also DBS Information Sheet – Identity Verification](#));
- Safeguarding Self Declaration (SSD) where the role is eligible – see also Policy Statement on Recruitment of Ex-Offenders.
- DBS Disclosure, where the role is eligible.
- Uptake of satisfactory references.
- Eligibility to Work in UK (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/286642/summary-guidance.pdf)
- Required health checks.

Shortlist and interview or formal discussion regarding role and suitability.

Select suitable applicants for interview or discussion and for those shortlisted, send a safeguarding self-declaration form for completion and advise that the completed form should be brought to interview.

For paid posts, a formal interview must be conducted and for unpaid posts, the prospective volunteer must participate in a formal discussion.

Both formal interviews and formal discussions should be used to assess the candidate's suitability including experience and skills for the role as well as motivation and attitude.

The interview or formal discussion should also be used to inform the applicant about the requirements of the role, expectations, time commitment, training and support provisions.

For paid positions, the completed Safeguarding Self-Disclosure (SSD) form should be discussed at the end of the formal interview process or at another agreed time after the interview. This process ensures that the applicant has the opportunity to provide context and explanation in respect of any relevant convictions.

The discussion about relevant convictions is to be fully documented on the Safeguarding Self-disclosure form (SSD) which is used by the applicant to disclose relevant offences.

For volunteers, relevant convictions do not need to be disclosed in advance or during the formal discussion about the role. The completed Safeguarding Self-Disclosure (SSD) is to be sent to the safeguarding office for processing with the DBS application.

Relevant convictions will be discussed with the volunteer applicant before a decision about appointment is made.

If identity verification is to take place at interview, applicants should be asked to bring original documentary evidence of identity to the interview in addition to completing the Catholic Church Identity Verification Form. Alternatively, arrangements can be made to verify identity after an offer of appointment is made.

Employment checks.

Uptake of satisfactory references Templates are available on the intranet or via the forms library.

For all posts, references from relatives or the current Parish Priest or Deacon are not acceptable. All references should be sought directly from the referee; generic references or those addressed "To whom it may concern" are not acceptable.

Those appointing (e.g. Parish Priest, Diocesan/Congregational HR or Care Home Manager) are responsible for satisfying themselves that references are authentic and should follow up with the referee by telephone or face to face discussion where:

- There are negative or ambiguous statements.
- There are gaps in information in the reference and further information is required.
- There is inconsistent information in the reference that you consider requires clarification.
- There are doubts about the authenticity of the reference.

In the event that any safeguarding concerns arise on receipt of a reference, advice can be sought from the Head of Safeguarding in the diocesan safeguarding office.

DBS Disclosure.

For eligible roles, the DBS Disclosure process is only undertaken once a provisional job/role offer has been made.

When an existing office holder, employee, or volunteer transfers into a position eligible for a DBS Disclosure, or a position that requires a different level of check, they will then be asked to undertake the Disclosure application process.

If the individual indicates they have an existing DBS Disclosure Certificate and have subscribed to the Online Update Service, any check made must be in accordance with the requirements of the DBS.

The CSSA National Database will be checked before any new application is made to the DBS to determine whether an existing suitable check has already been made and whether relevant risk information is available.

If the individual needs a new DBS Disclosure the counter-signatory in the diocesan safeguarding office or the safeguarding representative can advise on eligibility and the level of check required. The Head of Safeguarding or Parish Safeguarding Minister will initiate the application process, dependent upon the role of the appointee. The application process will include ID verification and self-disclosure of relevant offences. The details of the application will be added to the National Database.

Identity verification.

Clergy, Religious, lay persons, employees and volunteers are all required to evidence their identity as part of the DBS Disclosure process.

For roles that are not eligible for DBS Disclosure, the appointing person should verify the identity of the applicant in line with the documents accepted by the [DBS](#).

Safeguarding Self Declaration (SSD).

Anyone who is seeking to work with children or adults whether in a paid or unpaid capacity must be provided with the opportunity to self-disclose relevant conviction information. This is a DBS Code of Practice requirement and applies to anyone being asked to have an Enhanced Disclosure.

For Clergy, Religious and volunteers and as part of the DBS application process, the completed Safeguarding Self Declaration (SSD) should be handed to the Safeguarding Representative or relevant person and sent to the Safeguarding Office for processing. If the applicant requires, the declaration can be submitted in a sealed envelope for confidentiality purposes

The front page of the SSD clearly indicates how any information will be handled and how long the completed form will be retained for. This form also indicates that details of the DBS Disclosure will be retained on the National DBS Database.

In circumstances where the completed SSD is submitted to the Safeguarding Office in advance of the completed DBS application, the Counter-signatory has the discretion to determine the maximum validity of the completed SSD subject to a maximum period of 3 months.

For paid positions, applicants will be required to bring the completed SSD if invited for interview and as part of the process any relevant convictions will be discussed. Applicants should also be informed that the National Database will be checked in respect of all shortlisted applicants.

Right to work in the UK.

The appointing organisation/employer must satisfy itself that the paid or voluntary appointee is legally entitled to work in the UK.

Please refer to the "[Summary Guide for Employers on Preventing Illegal Working in the UK](#)" available from the UK Visas and Immigration website.

Required Health Checks.

Refer to your HR department for advice as to whether relevant health checks are required.

Appointment

Appointments should not be confirmed until a satisfactory DBS Disclosure has been received. Following appointment, the use of Disclosures must not be viewed as the final step in the process and should not replace the need for on-going vigilance, careful supervision and sound management.

Employees and volunteers should sign a document to indicate that they have received and understood the job/role description and agree to adhere to the national safeguarding policies and procedures. This should be retained by the Safeguarding Representative or employer. A sample document can be found in the Forms Library on the CSSA website.



Policy statement on the recruitment of ex-offenders.

Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy.

The Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) is the Registered Body with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for the processing of DBS Disclosures on behalf of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

The DBS code of practice published under section 122 of the Police Act 1997 advises that it is a requirement that all registered bodies must treat DBS applicants who have a criminal record fairly and not discriminate automatically because of a conviction or other information revealed.

The code also obliges registered bodies to have a written policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders; a copy of which can be given to DBS applicants at the outset of the recruitment process.

Policy statement.

The Catholic Church in England and Wales promotes equality of opportunity for all and welcomes applications from all candidates, including those with criminal records.

Candidates are selected for interview based on skills, qualifications, and relevant experience. The Church is committed to the fair treatment of its staff, potential staff, or users of its services, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependents, age, physical/mental disability or offending background.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from working within the Catholic community. Appointment to any role will depend on the nature of the position, the nature of the offence(s) and the circumstances and context of the offending behaviour.

Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.

When assessing applicants' suitability for positions which are included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order³ using criminal record checks processed through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), the appointing organization within the Catholic Church in England and Wales will comply fully with the DBS code of practice.

The appointing organization undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly and not discriminate unfairly against the applicant on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.

³ information about the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 is provided later in this document.

The organizations that make up the Catholic community in England and Wales undertake to fulfil the following responsibilities in the recruitment and appointment of individuals to paid or voluntary roles:

- A DBS Disclosure will only be requested when it has been assessed that the role being recruited to is eligible for a Disclosure (where the position is one that is included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 as amended, and where appropriate Police Act Regulations as amended);
- At the outset of the recruitment process, this policy statement on the recruitment of ex-offenders will be made known and made available to all applicants for whom a criminal record Disclosure (DBS Disclosure) will be required.
- Where a DBS Disclosure is required, all application forms, job adverts and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that an application for a DBS Disclosure will be submitted in the event of the individual being offered the position. A statement will also be made about the requirement for criminal records to be disclosed at interview stage.
- Subjects of DBS Disclosures will be made aware of the existence of the DBS Code of Practice and a copy will be made available on request.
- At interview, or in a separate discussion, an open and measured discussion will take place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position (unless the nature of the role allows questions to be asked about your entire criminal record, only "unspent" convictions as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 must be disclosed).
- Suitable training to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences will be provided for all those who are involved in the recruitment process. Appropriate guidance about the relevant legislation relating to the appointment of ex-offenders, e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, will also be provided.
- Any matter revealed on a DBS Certificate will be discussed with the individual seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

This Act primarily exists to support the rehabilitation into employment of reformed offenders who have stayed on the right side of the law.

Under the 1974 Act, following a specified period of time which varies according to the disposal administered or sentence passed, cautions and convictions (except those resulting in prison sentences of over four years and all public protection sentences⁴) may become spent. As a result, the offender is regarded as rehabilitated.

For most purposes the 1974 Act treats a rehabilitated person as if he or she had never committed, or been charged with charged or prosecuted for or convicted of or sentenced for the offence.

Once a caution or conviction has become spent under the 1974 Act, a person does not have to reveal it or admit its existence in most circumstances. Unless an exception applies then spent cautions and convictions need not be disclosed when filling in a form, or at a job interview. An employer cannot refuse to employ someone (or dismiss someone) because he or she has a spent caution or conviction unless an exception applies. The exceptions where you may have to declare spent cautions and convictions are listed in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975.

The following link takes you to an annex that describes the most commonly submitted positions and duties that are known as the exceptions to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This is not an exhaustive list however.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/519060/Guide_to_eligibility_v8.1.pdf

On the 29 May 2013, legislation came into force that allows certain old and minor cautions and convictions to no longer be subject to Disclosure. For further guidance and criteria, see - filtering of old and minor cautions and convictions.

For more information see

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299916/rehabilitation-of-offenders-guidance.pdf

⁴ A public protection sentence, the provisions for which are set out in Part 12 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and Part 8 of the Armed Forces Act 2006, means a sentence of imprisonment or detention imposed for specified sexual and violent offences.