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General Church Management Information and Update **2018/01**

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CHARITY COMMISSION GUIDANCE FOR THE PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS

Each member Church is a Charity, and so this circular is to remind all concerned within Church Life of the importance of this aspect in the day to day operation of your Church.

The Charity Commission has updated its [guidance](#) for charity trustees on the protection of vulnerable groups. Member Churches will all have their own safeguarding policies; however, the Charity Commission guidance is mandatory, as follows.

“Safeguarding is a key governance priority for all charities, not just those working with groups traditionally considered at risk. You should proactively safeguard and promote the well-being and welfare of your beneficiaries (the people the charity is set up to help).

You must take reasonable steps to make sure that beneficiaries and others who come into contact with the charity do not come to harm. You can find out more about safeguarding in charities by reading:

- [Charity Commission strategy for dealing with safeguarding issues](#)
- [Safeguarding children and young people](#)

Criminal record checks

There are legal restrictions under safeguarding legislation on who can be involved in working with children and adults at risk. Charities have a responsibility to:

- make sure that trustees, employees and volunteers are suitable to work with children and adults at risk
- request appropriate checks from the [Disclosure and Barring Service where the role is eligible](#)

- check that the individuals are legally able to act in the position, read [annex 1 of the Charity Commission safeguarding strategy](#).

There are additional legal restrictions under charity law on who can be a trustee which are explained in the following guidance:

- [finding new trustees \(CC30\)](#)
- [automatic disqualification rules: guidance for charities](#)

Safeguards to protect your beneficiaries and others who come into contact with your charity

You must put safeguards in place to protect those who come into contact with your charity. These include, but are not limited to:

- making all trustees, employees and volunteers aware of what abuse is and how to spot it
- having a clear system of reporting concerns as soon as abuse is identified or suspected
- responding to abuse or allegations of abuse rapidly and carrying out investigations confidentially
- preventing harm and abuse with a rigorous recruitment and interview process

How to respond to safeguarding incidents

To comply with your legal duties as a charity trustee, you must react responsibly to reports of safeguarding risks and incidents of abuse, and take steps to make sure that people working in the charity know how to deal with these.

As a trustee you should also make a [serious incident report to the Charity Commission](#). If you fail to report a serious incident that subsequently comes to light, the Commission may consider this to be mismanagement, for example, where the trustees have failed to manage the risks properly and breached their legal duties. This could prompt regulatory action, particularly if further abuse or damage has arisen following the initial incident.

Paid charity employees and advisers can [report suspected wrongdoing as a whistleblower](#).

Any person is able to [complain about a charity](#) to the Police, Fundraising Regulator and the Charity Commission.”

[Source: Charity Commission – 1 March]

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