

‘Safer Recruitment and People Management 2021’ Briefing Paper

What is ‘Safer Recruitment and People Management 2021’?

The Church of England’s safeguarding policy statement ‘Promoting a Safer Church’ outlines the Church’s commitment to promoting a safe environment and culture across all Church bodies for children and vulnerable adults. An essential part of this commitment is ensuring that all those who work or volunteer with vulnerable groups are suitable for the role they will carry out.

One way in which the Church aims to fulfil this commitment is by following ‘safer recruitment’ processes and ensuring continued vigilance once someone is in role. Obtaining a Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) Certificate is only one element of ‘safer recruitment’ processes. The reality is that many people who have abused or will abuse in positions of trust do not have a criminal record. Therefore, the wider process of ‘safer recruitment’ is an essential part of the Church of England’s approach to safeguarding.

Consequently, the National Safeguarding Team have reviewed its previous guidance, ‘Practice Guidance: Safer Recruitment’ which was first published in 2015 and in July 2021 published its new policy and associated guidance, ‘**Safer Recruitment and People Management’ (SR&PM)**. Whilst published in July 2021, the guidance can be immediately implemented although formal implementation is mandated for 4th January 2022.

What does ‘Safer Recruitment and People Management 2021’ do?

SR&PM goes beyond the previous ‘Practice Guidance: Safer Recruitment’ (2015). The revisions made offer Church Bodies clarity and detail on key areas which have been consistently raised as areas of concern and confusion; for example, safer recruitment processes and procedures, DBS eligibility criteria and renewal periods, reference checking requirements and who the guidance applies to.

Whilst the ‘process’ of safer recruitment does not significantly change in the new guidance, its requirements are written in more mandatory terms, and it places more marked responsibilities upon parishes to create robust ‘safer recruitment’ processes. Consequently, it will have an impact on parish ‘safer recruitment’ and DBS activities.

Additionally, the most significant change arising from this new guidance is the requirement to carry out DBS checks on a three-year basis rather than on a five-year basis.

Where can I access 'Safer Recruitment and People Management 2021' and what does it look like?

The **SR&PM** guidance is provided solely in an e-manual format which can be accessed directly from the [Church of England website](#). A link is also provided in the '[Safer Recruitment and People Management](#)' section of the Safeguarding webpages of the Diocese of Exeter website. The guidance exists solely as an online resource which will be updated regularly in accordance with law and policy changes.

Each step of the guidance is broken down into three sections:

1. **Requirements** – these are the recruitment processes and activities which must be undertaken.
2. **Good Practice Advice** – provides supporting advice, explanation or good practice ideas to help people in their delivery of the Requirements to a good standard.
3. **Tool Kit** – within each toolbox are draft templates which church settings can adapt so they do not need to create their own.

The guidance has been developed as a 'one stop shop' resource and as such you will find most of the things you need located within it. Consequently, you will find the Safeguarding webpages of the Diocese of Exeter website have changed. We hope these changes will make your browsing experience easier. However, if you cannot locate something you need, please get in touch: safeguardingenquiry@exeter.anglican.org.

Do I need to do anything?

The short answer is yes, it's very likely! If you are any of the following:

- A Line Manager
- Involved in the recruitment of Church Officers (employees, elected members, and volunteers)
- A Parish Safeguarding Representative or Safeguarding Officer in your church body
- Responsible for administering DBS checks
- An Ordinand during IME1

You will need to:

1. Read the guidance:

Please make yourself familiar with its contents and implement them where, when and how you are required to do so. If you are based in parishes, you will need to ensure 'Safer Recruitment and People Management' is raised as an agenda item on the next PCC meeting so everyone involved in church life who needs to be is aware of the changes and so they can be implemented.

2. Complete the 'Safer Recruitment' e-learning module:

To assist in the implementation of the guidance, an online 'Safer Recruitment' e-learning module has been developed. It is a simple and relatively short course that produces a certificate of completion that can be saved in an individual's personal file as evidence of competency when involved in recruitment. The module is available on the [National Safeguarding Training portal](#). A link is also available in the '[Safer Recruitment and People Management](#)' section of the 'Safeguarding' webpages on the Diocese of Exeter website. All those listed above are required to complete the module. It can also be completed by anyone else for whom it is deemed relevant.

3. Complete the 'Safer Recruitment and People Management Assessment Tool'

Within the guidance itself there is a simple '[Assessment Tool](#)' to help individuals and teams review and understand their current safer recruitment and people management practices and procedures. The tool easily identifies where there may be gaps in your processes. Parishes and other settings are encouraged to use this 'audit' prior to 2022 and remedy any gaps they may identify. It is proposed that all departments with EDBF similarly undertake the audit.

What do I do about DBS checks?

As outlined above, from January 2022 the Church of England require that all DBS checks must be renewed every three years rather than five years.

Therefore, all those involved with the process of applying for new and renewal DBS checks will need to review the DBS checks they are responsible for and ensure these are renewed at the three-year point. If it suits your department/team/parish/church to start this process prior to 4th January 2022 please proceed as soon as you are free to do so. For those who require more planning, please note this process must start no later than 4th January 2022.

We have set out the schedule below which, if followed, should ensure the DBS renewals you are required to undertake are processed in a manageable pattern. This will be particularly useful for those with high numbers of DBS checks to bring up to date.

Original DBS Check undertaken in:	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Action required:	Renew as normal in 2022	Renew in 2022	Renew in 2023	Will need to be renewed by the end of 2023 latest	Will need to be renewed by the end of 2024 latest

Please note: For anyone holding the Bishop's licence, commission, authorisation, or permission (Clergy, PTO, Readers, Licenced Lay Ministers) and ordinands DBS checks are carried out by EDBF staff only and must not be undertaken by Parish DBS Evidence Checkers. Parish DBS Evidence Checkers can undertake DBS checks for parish staff and volunteers only.

Can we use the DBS Update service now?

Diocese of Exeter still does not accept DBS checks registered with the DBS Update Service although it does not deter anyone from subscribing to the Update Serve if they wish to do so. There are several reasons why the diocese does not accept DBS checks held within the Update Service.

1. The Update Service does not produce an audit trail which means the diocese cannot prove a certificate was regularly checked if an investigation of an individual were ever necessary. However, a new DBS check undertaken through Thirtyone:eight produces a retrievable record. It also collects

an audit trail of all those involved in the application and of anyone who accesses the check subsequently.

2. The Update Service only updates its non-conviction information every 9 months for subscribing individuals, leaving a period of risk that the Diocese of Exeter has not been willing to accept.
3. Additionally, SR&PM outlines that a diocese cannot use the DBS update service for home-based positions if there is anyone else aged 16 years and over living or working at the applicant's home address.

Is there anything else we need to know about DBS checks?

Yes. As you will be aware Parish DBS Evidence Checkers currently can only invite applicants to start their DBS application and check an applicant's ID. They are then required to send a DBS Cover Sheet to their Archdeacons PA who then completes Section Y of the application (the section which sets the level of check required by the applicant). The PA also then approves the application and sends it off electronically to Thirtyone:eight for final checks. In this process, Parish DBS Evidence Checkers are unable to check the progress of the applications they have managed and do not get a notification when an application has been finally completed and a certificate issued. This process is labour-intensive and can create errors, withdrawn applications and adds to the workloads of all those involved.

Therefore, to make the process of managing DBS applications more streamlined **we will shortly be changing the Thirtyone:eight access for Parish DBS Evidence Checkers to enable them to complete Section Y, approve DBS applications and send them off to Thirtyone:eight themselves.** This change in access will also enable Parish Evidence Checkers to check the progress of the applications they have managed and get an email notification when an application has been finally completed. It will also negate the need for DBS Cover sheets to be emailed to Archdeacons PA's.

To make this happen **we will be in contact with all those registered as Parish DBS Evidence Checkers over the next few weeks to outline the changes and to identify a Lead DBS Evidence Checker in each parish who will be responsible for receiving the email notifications when applications are completed.** Once we have captured this information, we will then be in touch confirming a 'change-over' date. After this date Parish DBS Evidence Checkers will be responsible for processing each DBS application in its entirety and will need to direct any DBS queries or issues to the [Diocesan Administrator for Safeguarding and DBS](#) in the first instance.

The Thirtyone:eight Recruiters guide already contains all the information Parish DBS Evidence Checkers will require to manage DBS applications from start to finish. However, webinar training will be made available for those who feel they require it. Places will be limited to 40 people and will be offered on a first come first serve basis. More details will follow once a 'change-over' date has been set.

This sounds like a lot – who do I contact for assistance?

Please contact Rebecca Lane, Diocesan Administrator for Safeguarding and DBS, on 01392 294975 if you have queries, questions, need clarity or support.