



What happens when an offender wants to worship at your church?

The Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST) have devised this fact sheet and a six-step process to follow when an individual who has conviction/s for sexual offence/s (or other significant criminal record) wishes to worship in your church, including how this may be agreed, carefully supported and managed.

An individual's conviction can become known in a number of ways:

- The individual may offer this information willingly.
- The individual may have an allegation raised against them which the Diocese (and/or local church) knows about already, either because it arose within the church or because statutory authorities informed us of it.
- When an individual is convicted or receives a caution, the offence may be disclosed to the church or Diocesan Safeguarding Team under the police's public protection arrangements.
- Where information becomes known locally (in which case this must be reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) as an urgent priority).

The process will then be managed in accordance with the National Church's Practice Guidance.

The DST must be advised/consulted if it becomes known a person is attending or wishes to attend a church who it is believed has a conviction or other information indicating they may pose a risk to others.

Step One:

The DSA or Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (ADSA) will gather as much information as possible from the individual, the church and any of the statutory services involved (for example the police, probation, social care etc) and complete a risk assessment. The risk assessment considers what would be needed to ensure the person concerned could attend the church safely, such as appropriate boundaries, which service/s would be acceptable for them to attend, and what support would be required. **Under no circumstances should a church/benefice conduct a risk assessment themselves.**

Step Two:

Once a risk assessment has been carried out, the DSA/ADSA will be in touch with the church to discuss with the incumbent in confidence whether the church can support the person concerned to attend and to talk through any concerns or questions.

If it is felt the church could support an individual, the incumbent and DSA/ADSA will identify a 'small group' of church representatives, who will be made aware of the concerns/risks and of the agreed conditions with which the individual would be expected to comply. The group may typically involve the incumbent, a churchwarden, nominated person, someone designated to provide pastoral support, leader of any agreed activities and so on. The role of the 'small group' is to support the individual in their attendance, whilst ensuring that the agreed boundaries and limitations are maintained, and to raise any concerns as necessary.

Step Three:

The next step will be for the DSA/ADSA and incumbent to meet the individual, often with Police and Probation in attendance. At this meeting the 'Safety Plan' is explained and the details of what the individual can and cannot do or attend at the church. The Safety Plan will also include periods for review.

An offender may not attend the identified church until the Safety Plan is signed. Safety Plans also include such things as being clear the individual may not take up a position of trust or representation in the church, what activities they may attend and so on. Each Safety Plan is tailor-made for the individual, situation and context.

Step Four:

The DSA/ADSA will meet with the 'small group' to ensure they are clear about the risks the individual poses, their responsibilities concerning the management of the safety plan and what to do when concerns arise and need to be reported. The small group members are provided with clear information about their role. This is an opportunity for the small group members to ask questions and engage with the DST. The PCC will also be notified of the existence of a safety plan in the church, but no additional details will be provided.

Step Five:

The individual can then start attending the church on an agreed date. The 'small group' maintains oversight of the Safety Plan and its members support the individual. Any concerns, queries or need for further advice can be sought from the DST at any time. Any member of a small group can, and must, report any breach of the safety plan.

Step Six:

Most importantly the Safety Plan will be reviewed at regular intervals. All reviews are co-ordinated and led by the DST in consultation with the incumbent. Reviews are carried out at

least annually but can also happen if new information comes to light, if circumstances change, where there is a breach of an agreement, or if other concerns are expressed about risk management. Review meetings will also check out what is working well, and what support has been helpful.

Safety Plans don't necessarily end when an individual moves away, stops attending a church or is no longer monitored by statutory services such as Police or Probation so the DST needs to be kept up to date with any changes so that these can be reported as required.

For further advice contact the DST on 01392 294929 or [email](#).

Revision History

Version No.	Revision Date	Summary of Changes	Revision Author
1.0	11/07/2017	Initial version	Charlie Pitman
2.0	12/06/2020	Updated with new branding and contemporary terminology.	Charlie Pitman
2.1	05/08/2020	Minor typo corrections and version control added.	Phill Parker
2.2	12/03/2021	Font changed to reflect house style. Link to other document removed.	Rebecca Lane
2.3	22/09/2022	New DSA contact details added.	Rebecca Lane
2.4	23/02/2025	Revisions to wording and content.	Rebecca Lane