

# SAFETY PLANS

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**The Church's duty to minister to all imposes a responsibility to ensure that everyone attending the Church is safe.**

A Safety Plan (formerly known as a Worship/ Attendance Agreement) is a crucial measure to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone within our church communities.

Safeguarding procedures within the Church of England are governed by House of Bishops' Guidance - which provides the legal framework to safeguarding policies within the Church.

July 2024

# WHAT IS A SAFETY PLAN & WHY?

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A Safety Plan is designed to facilitate the safe inclusion and worship for individuals about whom the circumstances or information suggest they **may** pose a risk to other members of the congregation or church community.

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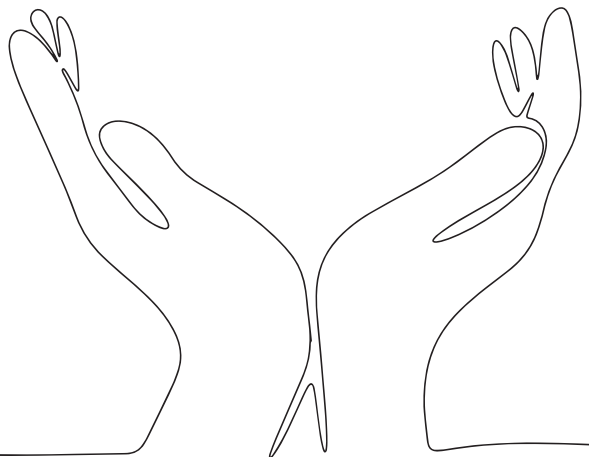
This may include individuals who have criminal convictions as well as those subject of allegations or concerns.

The purpose of a Safety Plan is to reduce and minimise the risk to children and vulnerable adults within the Church. It also aims to create a safe and supportive environment for the individual, minimising risk of further allegations and re-offending, and enabling them to receive appropriate ministry within explicit bounds of confidentiality.

Every case will be looked at on an

individual basis, and dealt both with compassion and respect.

A Safety Plan process is developed collaboratively and agreed between The Church of England, the Diocese of Truro and you, as well as statutory agencies if involved. It will explore “what we’re worried about”, “what’s working well?”, and “what can be done?” to support safe worship and inclusion within the church context. It will reflect your individual needs and circumstances, and it will be reviewed at regular intervals.



# THE REFERENCE GROUP

The diocesan safeguarding team will set up a Reference Group within the parish who will oversee the Safety Plan at parish level. They will be a group of trusted people bound by confidentiality whom you can turn to for help and support with openness

and transparency. The group will normally include an Incumbent, Parish Safeguarding Officer and Churchwarden(s). They may also include a link person or statutory agency if involved.

# REVIEWS

Reviews will be conducted at least annually; or when there is a significant change in circumstances to either you as the individual or perhaps members of the Reference Group.

Reviews will seek both your view and that of the Reference Group to see what is working well and address anything that is not.

# WHAT IF THERE ARE NO STATUTORY RESTRICTIONS?

Individuals sometimes come to Church after being dealt with by a court or upon leaving prison, some with specific conditions and restrictions, perhaps whilst on License, community sentence or pre-trial bail conditions, or whilst under investigation.

These measures are legally imposed but usually time restrained. Removal from them is not a risk-based decision, and risk does not vanish along with these statutory restrictions when they end. In other words, there is no time limit placed on safeguarding.

Research indicates there is an increased risk of re-offending following de-regulation, but re-cidivism is greatly reduced when individuals are supported in developing pro-social

relationships within constructive positive social environments. A Safety Plan supports individuals to access the church community safely.

As time moves on, problems can arise from 'drift' when expectations are not written down. Forgetfulness, blurring of boundaries, confusion, a sense that it isn't important because there is no written record stating such. And all these possibilities are exacerbated when changes occur within a parish.

A Safety Plan demonstrates a joint commitment from both you as an individual and the diocese. There is no opportunity for either to claim not to be aware or know what the restrictions and supports in place are.

# BOUNDARIES

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The Church of England and Diocese of Truro adopt an approach that prioritises the needs of Victims and Survivors of abuse. Those connected with the specific, and those affected in the wider sense.

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The approach we take will be Trauma-Informed in that we will seek to act in a way that does not traumatise or re-traumatise, and recognises the sensitivity of the issues, it will embody - safety, trust, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural considerations.

All individuals subject to a Safety Plan can expect a warm welcome and inclusion within the Church as a member of the congregation. However, the Bishop of Truro and the senior team have agreed that it is not appropriate for someone who is the subject of a Safety Plan to be offered, or accept, any official role or office within the Church. This would include for instance, becoming a member of the PCC, taking on any

pastoral responsibility or care of others, Reading Prayers or Leading Intercessions or becoming involved in the running or organisation of any groups.

This is not a punitive decision. If an individual is given a formal role, it may appear to others that they have been put in a position of responsibility (however big or small) and therefore may indicate a higher level of trust or honesty. The risk is that an individual may then appear to a vulnerable person/child as being a trusted or 'safe' person within the Church. This could present an increased risk to both children and vulnerable persons as well as the individual, and lead to unnecessary risky situations occurring.

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## CONFIDENTIALITY & PRIVACY

Safety Plans contain private, sensitive, and sometimes confidential information. Only the agreed individuals named on the Safety Plan will be privy and they will be individuals who are in a position of leadership and who have completed the highest level of safeguarding training. Each member of the Reference Group will sign to confirm they understand and will adhere to strict confidentiality concerning the Safety Plan.

The PCC (Parochial Church Council) as trustees of a charity are collectively accountable, and as such are required to know about the 'existence' of any

Safety Plan. They will not be given any of the sensitive or confidential details contained within. You can be assured that your personal information will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone outside the Reference Group.

Convictions are a matter of public record and the extent to which a local community may be aware of or seek to find out about an individual through public records, social media, or internet, is beyond our control. The Safety Plan in part seeks to manage the impact and response of the local community if such information does become known.

# COMPLIANCE

The Safety Plan is not a legally binding document, and the Safety Plan process is voluntary but your compliance is valued and contributes to the positive and supportive nature of the plan. However the requirement for safeguarding measures, risk assessment, and risk management, are as set by the Church of England, House of Bishops' Guidance and is a legal framework.

It is important to recognise that an individual's right to attend church is limited solely to public worship in the parish in which they live. If the proposed Safety Plan includes exclusion or limitation from certain service of public worship, we recognise this is by agreement.

A refusal to sign a Safety Plan will be reflected in the risk assessment and may necessitate more stringent restrictions being imposed such as, wider disclosure to ensure monitoring activities, and greater restrictions from other church-related activities.

Should you feel unable to agree and sign the Safety Plan please discuss this with a member of the Reference Group and/or the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer/Deputy Diocesan

Safeguarding Officer, where your concerns and comments will be noted and considered. The Safety Plan will then be amended to reflect this before its implementation.

The diocesan safeguarding team would hope to resolve and address any concerns around compliance, but in the unfortunate eventuality they cannot, there are certain legal parameters open to the Church. These include but are not limited to, Ecclesiastical Courts Jurisdiction Act 1860 which gives Churchwardens powers to direct a person where to sit, put measures in place to closely supervise them (for example, accompany the individual) and remove that person from church grounds if they cause a disturbance.

There may also be action that can be taken if individuals refuse to enter into, or comply with, a Safety Plan where the person is subject to supervision by a statutory agency. For instance, information in relation to any failure to comply could be shared with the police/probation service or an individual's offender manager who will consider whether there has been a breach of any civil/statutory order.

Whilst we hope that you find the process supportive and collaborative, we do recognise that it may feel uncomfortable for some. If you have any questions, please do contact the diocesan safeguarding team. Email: [safeguardingconcerns@truro.anglican.org](mailto:safeguardingconcerns@truro.anglican.org)

## MORE INFORMATION

### VISIT THE DIOCESAN WEBSITE

[trurodiocese.org.uk/resources/safeguarding/](http://trurodiocese.org.uk/resources/safeguarding/)

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## GET IN CONTACT

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