

POLICY STATEMENT on the RECRUITMENT of EX-OFFENDERS

Ham Hill Villages Benefice, Somerset

OUR SAFEGUARDING COMMITMENT

This parish agrees to follow the National Church Safeguarding Policy, Practice Guidance from the House of Bishops on safeguarding matters, and to adopt the Diocese of Bath and Wells Safeguarding Policies.

Accordingly, the parish has adopted the Diocese Policy Statement¹ on the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders to all paid and voluntary roles undertaken in our parish, in line with our **Safer Recruitment Policy** and procedures.

Whilst it is the PCC who is responsible for appointments of paid or voluntary roles, it is the Diocese of Bath & Wells who carries out Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks on behalf of the parish, through the organisation Thirtyone:Eight, and who provides advice and guidance in undertaking risk assessments as part of the recruitment process, as set out below. In all instances of appointment the Parish Safeguarding Officer must be consulted with regard to the assessment of the level of DBS check required and Confidential Declaration Form.

Principles:

The Code of Practice² 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.

Information regarding conviction information

On the 29 May 2013, legislation³ came into force that allows certain old and minor cautions and convictions to no longer be subject to disclosure.

- In addition, employers will no longer be able to take an individual's old and minor cautions and convictions into account when making decisions.
- All cautions and convictions for specified serious violent and sexual offences, and other specified offences of relevance for posts concerned with safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, will remain subject to disclosure. In addition, all convictions resulting in a custodial sentence, whether or not suspended, will remain subject to disclosure, as will all convictions where an individual has more than one conviction recorded.
- Further guidance is available from the Disclosure & Barring Service regarding the filtering of old and minor cautions and convictions which are now 'protected' and therefore not subject to disclosure to employers.

Diocese of Bath & Wells Policy Statement

- As an organisation assessing applicants' suitability for positions which are included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order using criminal record checks processed through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), the Diocese of Bath & Wells complies fully with the Code of Practice and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly.
- The Diocese of Bath & Wells undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a criminal record check on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.
- The Diocese of Bath & Wells will only ask an individual to provide details of convictions and cautions that we are legally entitled to know about. Where a DBS certificate at either standard or enhanced level can legally be requested (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), the Diocese of Bath & Wells will only ask an individual about convictions and cautions that are not protected.

¹ <https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/content/pages/documents/safeguarding-policy-statement-on-the-recruitment-of-ex-offenders.docx>

² . A copy of the Code of Practice can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-code-of-practice>

³ See Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2013; and Police Act 1997 (Criminal Record Certificates: Relevant Matters) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2013.

- The Diocese of Bath & Wells 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 dependants, age, physical/mental disability or offending background.
- The Diocese of Bath & Wells actively promotes equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records. The Diocese of Bath & Wells selects all candidates for interview based on their skills, qualifications and experience.
- An application for a criminal record check is only submitted to the DBS after a risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned.
- For those positions where a criminal record check is identified as necessary, the application pack will contain a statement that an application for a DBS certificate will be submitted in the event of the individual being offered the position.
- All volunteers and applicants, who are provided with a conditional offer of employment, will be required to complete a Confidential Declaration Form as part of their pre-employment checks. The Confidential Declaration Form, in broad summary, asks if there is any reason why he/she should not be working with children and adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect. Should a volunteer or applicant not wish to complete the Confidential Declaration, which is entirely his/her choice, the application will not proceed further and will be terminated.
- Having a criminal record may not necessarily be a bar to working with children or adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect. Any information provided on either a Confidential Declaration Form or a DBS certificate will be assessed by the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser to assess whether an appointment can be made.
- The Diocese of Bath & Wells ensures that those involved in the recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences or are aware of whom to seek guidance from which will normally be the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser. The Diocese of Bath & Wells also ensures that they have received appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders, e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- At interview, or in a separate discussion, the Diocese of Bath & Wells ensures that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.
- The Diocese of Bath & Wells undertakes to discuss any matter revealed on a DBS certificate with the individual seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment. Where a DBS check reveals convictions that may be relevant, the Diocese reserves the right to employ an individual subject to a risk assessment and a risk management plan being put in place. Failure to accept the outcomes of the risk assessment or abide by the risk management plan could result in employment not being offered or the employment being terminated.