

# Safeguarding Responsibilities of Churchwardens

## Introduction

In October 2017, the House of Bishops published *Key Roles and Responsibilities of Church Office Holders and Bodies Practice Guidance*. Section 3.2 of that document describes the safeguarding responsibilities of churchwardens as printed below.

Churchwardens are the senior lay representatives of the parish. The role of the churchwarden is extremely varied but generally involves management, maintenance and mission<sup>1</sup> in accordance with the Churchwardens Measure 2001 and the Canons of the Church of England (see in particular Canon E1).

They are the foremost in representing the laity and in co-operating with the incumbent, and they have a duty to maintain order and decency in the church and churchyard, particularly during the times of divine service. In cooperation with the incumbent, churchwardens are generally responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the parish.

## Safeguarding Responsibilities

In relation to safeguarding, the churchwardens work with the incumbent, PCC and Parish Safeguarding Officer to:

- Ensure that in the period of a vacancy (during an interregnum), that the incumbent's safeguarding roles and responsibilities are fulfilled, in consultation with the PCC, Parish Safeguarding Officer and the area dean;
- Pay attention to the specific needs of children and vulnerable adults when undertaking health and safety inspections and risk assessment;
- Ensure that risk assessments are carried out before new activities are undertaken;
- Ensure that all parish activities with children and vulnerable adults are adequately supervised and insured;
- Ensure that the parish has procedures for responding to complaints<sup>2</sup> and grievances;
- Answer questions regarding safeguarding as they arise in the archdeacon's visitations, and respond to any specific safeguarding advice, which may be given from the archdeacon.

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<sup>1</sup> See Canon E1 para 4 – Churchwardens are charged with active participation in the Church's mission – "...use their best endeavours by example and precept to encourage the parishioners in the practice of true religion and to promote peace and unity among them".

<sup>2</sup> Please note this does not mean safeguarding concerns or allegations but complaints about the quality of a response or activity.