

Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) Eligibility Guidance

The table below offers guidance on frequently found church-based roles and their DBS eligibility.

The guidance is **indicative and not exhaustive** due to the complexity of the Church of England and local variations in approaches, titles and roles (e.g. different roles can be called the same thing and vice versa).

If Church bodies have a query on the eligibility for a particular role, then all formal legal advice on which they intend to rely should be sought from their diocesan registrar or their own lawyer.

If an umbrella body is used (e.g. 31:8), then they may be able to assist with eligibility queries.

The DBS's own eligibility guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dbs-eligibility-guidance>

The DBS also provides a customer service helpline, details of which can be found here: [Disclosure and Barring Service - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service) and have a regional outreach service that Church bodies can access: [The DBS Regional Outreach service - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service). The outreach team are able to provide additional support, as well as run workshops on DBS eligibility.

A. Clergy - **All** require an **Enhanced DBS with barred list check**

- Applies to **all** Church of England ordained and licensed Clergy including Archbishops, Bishops, Archdeacons, Deans, stipendiary parish Clergy, self-supporting Minister / non stipendiary Ministers, Chaplains, locally ordained Clergy, Clergy with permission to officiate (PtO), and those seeking ordination training or ordination.

B. Individuals (other than Clergy) working/volunteering with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults. This includes those in training and individuals on student placements.

- Individuals working/volunteering with children/young people
Most **will** require an **Enhanced DBS with barred list check** unless they are supervised or do not fulfil the Frequency Criteria (e.g. they are on a rota).

“Supervised” activity is defined by the Church of England as activity where the supervisor (themselves safely recruited) is always able to see the supervised worker’s actions during their work – if this level of monitoring cannot be maintained continuously then the role is not a supervised position.

“Frequency Criteria” is defined as once a week or more; 4 days or more in any 30-day period or overnight between the hours of 2am and 6am.

▪ Individuals working/volunteering with vulnerable adults

Most **will** require an **Enhanced DBS without barred list check**, provided they satisfy the Frequency Criteria.

Some **may** require an **Enhanced DBS with barred list check** if, for example, they provide, personal care, assistance with cash, bills or shopping, conveying someone to or from healthcare, personal care or social care (but not to church activities).

Examples of roles that this **may** apply to:

- Readers; Worship Leaders; Authorised Lay Ministers; Licensed Evangelists
- Lay people authorised to provide pastoral care, e.g. Parish Pastoral Assistant, Pastoral Home Visitor, Street Pastor, Authorised Listener, Pastoral Outreach Worker and equivalents in Cathedrals e.g. Cathedral Verger who has pastoral care in job role
- Youth worker or Leader; Children’s worker or Leader
- Sunday school teacher or Leader; Family workers who work with children or their Leader
- Bell ringers who teach or train children plus the Tower Captains who manage those adults who teach or train
- Music leader where the choir or musical group includes children
- Head Server when the role includes supervision or training of children
- Parish volunteer driver for vulnerable groups (children or adults) for children’s/adults’ activities organised by the body (NB: private/personal arrangements among parents/friends etc. are exempt)
- Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers, Cathedral Safeguarding Advisers and Parish Safeguarding Officers who manage people engaged in activities with children, young people or vulnerable adults (nb. “manage” here includes planning, organising, advising or directing)
- Members of National Safeguarding Team and other roles within Diocesan Safeguarding Teams where working with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults (or managing on a day-to-day basis individuals who are working with children/young people/vulnerable adults)
- Diocesan Education staff who either have substantial contact with children or manage those who do
- Leader of Parent & Toddler Groups (but not parent helpers who supervise their own children or if a self–help group)
- Managers of individuals working with children, young people and vulnerable adults
- Those in religious communities (e.g. monks, nuns, brothers and sisters) who are in active ministry and work with children, young people or vulnerable adults.

C. Charity Trustees of children's, young people or vulnerable adult's charities

- The Charity Commission recommends that trustees always obtain a DBS check when eligible to do so as it is an important tool in ensuring that the person is suitable to act as a trustee.
- If a governing body is registered as a charity and provided it sponsors and approves, in its own name, children's, young people or vulnerable adult's work then the members of the governing body will be eligible for an **Enhanced DBS without barred list check**. This **may** relate to PCCs, Cathedrals Chapters, Religious Communities, NCI Pension Board etc. **In such cases all members of the governing body will be eligible.**
- PCC members, although charity trustees, are not by virtue of their membership of the PCC engaging in 'regulated activity' with children or vulnerable adults and are therefore not eligible for enhanced DBS disclosures (with barred list checks). Charity trustees are eligible for enhanced DBS disclosures (without barred list checks) if the charity qualifies as a "children's charity"¹ or a "vulnerable adults' charity"².
- Provision of a Sunday School would not generally satisfy this requirement because the teaching of children in church on Sundays is, as a matter of law, an activity carried out in furtherance of the incumbent's duty (under Canon C 24.4) to "instruct the parishioners of the benefice, or cause them to be instructed, in the Christian faith". PCCs have no specific duties in relation to providing instruction in the Christian faith. A careful analysis will be required to see whether the PCC does qualify, there can be no blanket approach.
- For example, if a PCC is a charity and it sponsors and approves, in its own name, work with children, young people or vulnerable adults, by entering into an employment contract with a youth worker to run a youth club or other children's activities or entering into a contractual arrangement with a worker to provide a regular care service to adults who receive a health or social care service, then the PCC **may** qualify as a children's or vulnerable adults'

¹ (4) A charity is a children's charity if the individuals who are workers for the charity normally include individuals engaging in regulated activity relating to children

(5) An individual is a worker for a charity if he does work under arrangements made by the charity; but the arrangements referred to in this sub-paragraph do not include any arrangements made for purposes which are merely incidental to the purposes for which the charity is established. (*Part 1, Schedule 4, para 4, Safeguarding and Vulnerable Groups Act 2006—now repealed but having continuing effect by virtue of regulation 5C(1) of the Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) Regulations 2002.*)

² (5B) Work with adults: (1)(g)(ix) a charity trustee of a charity whose workers normally engage in any activity which is work with adults.

... (5) In paragraph (1)(g)(ix) an individual is a worker for a charity if he does work under arrangements made by the charity; but the arrangements referred to in this paragraph do not include any arrangements made for purposes which are merely incidental to the purposes for which the charity is established. *Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) Regulations 2002 (as amended)*

- charity (as the case may be) and in such circumstances PCC members would be eligible for an enhanced DBS check. PCCs, however, **may not** meet the definition of a “children’s charity” or “vulnerable adults’ charity”. You are advised to seek advice from the registrar in relation to such matters.

D. Roles that are not eligible for an Enhanced DBS with/without barred list check (unless undertaking any role in A, B or C above) but remain eligible for a Basis DBS check

- There is no eligibility requirement for a Basic DBS Check and both individuals and bodies (the latter with appropriate consent) can apply for one. Currently there is a cost for a Basic DBS, including volunteers. Individuals can apply for their own whilst bodies must use a ‘responsible organisation’. Whilst a Basic DBS provides minimal information (unspent conviction information only), where a role does not meet the criteria for any other level of DBS it can send out a certain message in respect of the body’s commitment to safeguarding.

Further detail on Responsible Organisations can be found here –
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/responsible-organisations>

Examples of roles that this may apply to:

- Parish Verger; Server; Caretaker; Refreshment helper
- Shop Staff; Flower arranger; Sidesperson
- PCC members (including church wardens) where the PCC does not qualify as a children’s/young people’s/vulnerable adult’s charity
- Bell ringers (rank and file); Choir leader or musical director for adult choir; Organist unless also directing a choir which contains children/young people
- Choir members/music group members (unless the role includes responsibility for teaching, training, caring for or supervising vulnerable groups (children, young people or adults).