

# Supporting Volunteers Policy

## 1. Summary

St James church operates mainly through the efforts of some 80 volunteers. The jobs range from slots on rotas through to leadership roles. We need to look after all our volunteers, making sure that they know what is expected of them, are trained appropriately and supported on an ongoing basis. We also need to make sure that our recruitment processes are fair and take into account safeguarding requirements.

This policy sets out how we do all of the above. It is aimed primarily at anyone in a leadership role, including churchwardens, church officers, coordinators and team leaders.

We are deliberately not using terms such as "line management" and "human resources" in this policy. We want to look after each other as equals before God, with "every member ministry" a cornerstone of our church's ethos. But in a church of our size, we do need to be intentional about how we do this. This policy therefore aims to provide a management framework to ensure that nobody is left without support.

## 2. What is a volunteer?

A volunteer is:

- anyone who undertakes any role within the church on an unpaid basis.
- a "church officer", an all-encompassing term used in many diocesan and national church documents. While this often means those carrying out defined roles such as churchwarden, PCC member, treasurer, secretary, etc, in other instances it can mean any member of staff, paid or volunteer.
- someone who has been given responsibility and can therefore be assumed to be a trustworthy person and someone who will know who to talk to about any church-related matter. Conversations might reveal situations that are concerning, so all volunteers need safeguarding awareness training, so they know how to respond in such circumstances. This is especially important for lone workers (such as someone doing cleaning, flower-arranging or repair jobs) when they meet a casual visitor to the church and may find a conversation going in any direction. It is also important for those in "up front" roles (including singers and musicians) who are more noticeable and may attract a higher degree of trust by default.

A volunteer is not an "amateur". The term simply means that they are unpaid. In all other respects they are a full member of staff. This means that all legislation that applies to staff applies equally to volunteers. And it means that volunteers should see their roles in a similar light. For example, where specific training is required for a role, it should be the same irrespective of whether the role is paid or unpaid. Conversely, volunteering should not be matter of picking and choosing which aspects of a role to do and which to ignore; if appropriate, a role can be re-scoped to fit an individual, but once the job is agreed, it should be carried out responsibly and in full.

### **3. Management**

Supporting volunteers means making sure that everyone is happy doing the job they have committed to do and attending to gaps that may appear from time to time. Alongside this, the time and expertise of the individuals need to be taken into account, and the roles kept under review so that no job becomes burdensome.

The operation of this policy is dependent on all leaders taking responsibility for their own teams. Churchwardens and coordinators all run teams of different sizes and shapes, and there may be team leaders within those groups.

It is the responsibility of all leaders to:

- Safely recruit new members of their teams
- Review with each team member how their volunteering role is working out
- Arrange training for their teams as appropriate.

The PCC should review the operation of each team over the course of a year. The way this is to be done needs to be developed once other essential aspects of this policy are enacted.

This policy is to be reviewed by the PCC annually.

### **4. Recruitment and Safeguarding**

All roles in the church should be filled through an appropriate recruitment process.

The level of detail will vary according to the nature of the role, but all recruitment should cover the following subject areas:

- Job description – knowing what the job entails
- Training – knowing how to do the job properly and safely
- Oversight – knowing who is supporting the volunteer
- Safeguarding – knowing that both the volunteer and the church are protected.

There are three levels of recruitment:

- For all roles involving direct contact with children or vulnerable adults, safeguarding rules require a full safer recruitment process. This includes DBS<sup>1</sup> checks, references and interview. The level of DBS check that applies to each role is set out in the Parish Safeguarding Policy.
- For other leadership roles of any kind, the safer recruitment process will be followed, without DBS checks, but including references.
- For other roles, a basic induction process will suffice including information about what is expected of the role and including safeguarding awareness training as a minimum.

A volunteer for any post must be a regular attender at church, who has ideally been coming for at least 3 months, so that they have had a chance to settle in and discern what God is leading them to. This is of particular importance for roles eligible for DBS checks, and for up-front roles in services where the volunteers can be regarded by implication as being a trustworthy person.

For leadership roles, a longer period of attendance is desirable, but this will usually be the case because a team leader will normally have served some time as a team member

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<sup>1</sup> DBS = Disclosure and Barring Service checks. Formerly known as CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checks.

beforehand. In most cases, a prospective leader is likely to have attended for at least 6 months before being in this position.

For one-off events, the team members should be identified in advance (not press-ganged on the day) and given a briefing about their role and how it fits into the overall picture.

People in diocesan-managed roles, such as PTO clergy, readers, and ordinands, are outside the scope of this policy. Similarly, the participation of those exploring ordination is at the discretion of the vicar.

## **5. Job descriptions**

Job descriptions have two main components:

- Standard wording that applies to all roles. This should be reviewed annually by the PCC and checked for consistency against the Parish Safeguarding Policy.
- Role-specific wording, which is the responsibility of the leader.

A record copy of all job descriptions should be kept centrally for reference by all leaders.

## **6. Review with the volunteer**

Every team leader should review the situation with each member of their team at least annually. This may be an informal individual conversation, or where more appropriate, a team meeting. Ideally, the conversation should not reveal anything unexpected, if the team leader has been talking to their team members as the year progresses.

The annual review should cover the following:

- Thank the volunteer for all their work during the year. If practicable, also get the whole team together for an annual party.
- Listen to any concerns the volunteer might have – about their performance, their colleagues, niggles with the job, etc.
- Ask the volunteer if they are happy continuing in the role. If they've been doing the job for some time, ask if they'd like a break. Watch out for them keeping on doing the job only because they think nobody else wants to do it.
- Look at what other jobs the volunteer might be doing and ask if the overall load is difficult and might need to give somewhere.
- Ask the volunteer if they would like to see changes in the way the job is done, and if they have any ideas about improving and extending the service provided.
- Review the job description to make sure that it is still accurate
- Explore future possibilities for the volunteer. Might God be calling them to something else? Might they benefit from being stretched a little (the Growing Leaders course was a revelation to many taking part).

The team leader should concentrate on the individual, not the job, during the review. A "whole church" view is to be encouraged, as the individual may be more gainfully employed somewhere else and might be a lot happier in a role they haven't considered. And there are wider roles within Taunton in the many para-church organisations, not to mention vocations in the national church and overseas organisations. However, the team leader is not expected to be an expert in discerning someone's calling: the matter should be referred to the vicar if the conversation begins to explore areas outside the team leader's expertise.

## 7. Training

Training for each volunteer will be a mixture of standard courses or handouts for all volunteers, and specific training for the role.

Standard training is arranged centrally and includes:

- Safeguarding – at least the basic awareness course for all volunteers, with higher levels as appropriate for certain roles.
- Health and safety – the Safe Working Reminders are reviewed by the PCC annually and are made available to all church members.
- Fire Awareness and First Aid – primarily for wardens, deputy wardens and leaders of certain groups which meet on site.

Refresher training for these areas is also arranged centrally.

Role-specific training may include:

- Courses where these are available and relevant
- Checklists or Aide-Memoirs where they are required
- Induction into the operation of equipment.

Refresher training should be arranged as appropriate.

## 8. Disagreements

Where there is an unresolvable disagreement between a volunteer and their team leader or coordinator, the matter should be referred to the Vicar and Churchwardens. They will then follow the procedure set out in the PCC's Complaints Policy (which may be found in the *PCC Standing Orders*).

## 9. Administration

With a large number of volunteers, and a wide range of posts, records need to be kept and maintained. The church members database covers safeguarding recruitment and training requirements, and accordingly matches each individual with each of their roles.

The database is maintained by the church administrator, the Parish Safeguarding Officer and the vicar. An assistant administrator may also be appointed to help with this task.

Reports can be made available from the database to meet the needs of any team leaders. Requests should be made to the church office if none of the standard reports are suitable. It is intended that coordinators will be given appropriate database extracts on a regular basis.

The administrators are also the custodians of the reference file of job descriptions.

## 10. Expenses

Volunteers are entitled to have expenses reimbursed.

However, any other payment could be seen as constituting the basis for an employment contract and the consequent payment of all hours at the National Minimum Wage. The Charity Commission guidance states: *if a volunteer receives any type of reward or payment other than expenses, they may see this as a salary and they could be classed as an employee or worker. This then gives them some employment rights.*

Regarding payments to volunteers for stewarding at concerts and other events managed by third parties, we are simply passing on the payment from the hirer of our premises.

## **11. Insurance**

The church's insurance policy covers all activities that are approved by the PCC.

In the case of church volunteers working at St James Church School, the school administrator provided the following advice from their insurers:

Volunteers do fall under the definition of an "employee" within the B&WMAT Public and Employers' Liability Insurance so the schools are afforded cover for volunteers in the same way as their paid employees.

It is however important that you complete suitable risk assessments for the tasks that are to be completed and that risks that are apparent are mitigated or removed. A signed waiver is not appropriate however as part of the risk assessment it is essential that consideration be given to adequate training and supervision to be able to complete the tasks in hand. Certain tasks will possibly only be able to be completed by individuals with adequate training/experience/qualifications.

He also clarified that in the case of accidental damage being caused by a volunteer, they "would treat such damage the same way we would treat accidental damage to school property by a member of staff, ie we would not seek compensation."

(June 2023 PCC minutes refer.)

## **12. Guidance**

The Charity Commission publishes guidance on how to manage volunteers: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-manage-your-charitys-volunteers>. This includes:

- Legal status of volunteers
- Expenses for volunteers
- Insurance to cover volunteers.

Guidance is also published by NCVO: <https://beta.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/involving-volunteers/>, covering a wide range of subjects.