

Volunteer Policy

St Peter's, Colchester

Adopted by the PCC: [tbc]

Review date: [3 years]

Policy owner: The Parochial Church Council

1. Purpose

This policy explains how St Peter's seeks to welcome, support, guide and oversee those who volunteer or serve in the life of the church.

Volunteers are a vital part of the life, witness and ministry of St Peter's. Much of the church's life depends on people offering their time, gifts, experience, energy and care in the service of Christ and his church.

The Parochial Church Council has responsibility for the governance and oversight of St Peter's, including the proper oversight of volunteering, safeguarding, risk, health and safety, use of resources, and the good order of church life.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we seek to be faithful in all that we say and do. That includes how we invite people to serve, how we support and train volunteers, how we protect the vulnerable, how we use authority, and how we respond when concerns arise.

This policy is intended to help volunteering at St Peter's be joyful, safe, well-supported, properly accountable and consistent with the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, the policies of the PCC, and the mission and ministry of St Peter's.

2. Scope

This policy applies to those who volunteer, serve, lead or assist in the life of St Peter's, whether regularly or occasionally.

This may include, but is not limited to:

- children's and youth ministry volunteers;
- pastoral visitors and pastoral care volunteers;
- welcome, hospitality and service teams;
- musicians, singers, readers, intercessors and service participants;
- small-group leaders and course helpers;
- building, maintenance, gardening and practical volunteers;
- administration, finance, communications and technology volunteers;

- PCC members, churchwardens and other elected or appointed officers, where they are acting in a voluntary capacity;
- those helping with events, outreach, community use, churchyard, hall or other parish activities.

Some roles carry additional requirements because they involve safeguarding, leadership, teaching, pastoral care, children, young people, vulnerable adults, confidential information, money, buildings, keys, driving, equipment, public representation or other responsibilities.

This policy should be read alongside the Code of Conduct, Welcome, Dignity and Fair Treatment Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Safer Recruitment arrangements, Ministry Role Descriptions, Social Media Policy, Data Protection Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Finance Policy, Complaints Policy, Whistleblowing Policy and other relevant PCC policies.

3. Christian foundation

Volunteering at St Peter's is part of Christian service. It is not merely filling gaps on a rota, but using gifts, time and responsibility for the good of Christ's church and the blessing of others.

The Apostle Peter writes:

*"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another,
as good stewards of God's varied grace."
– 1 Peter 4:10, ESV*

We believe that every member of the church family has gifts, and that the body of Christ is built up as people serve one another in love. We therefore want to encourage willing service, recognise different gifts, avoid unnecessary barriers, and help people find appropriate ways to contribute.

At the same time, not every role is suitable for every person at every time. Some roles require particular maturity, competence, safeguarding checks, training, doctrinal alignment, reliability, availability, or ability to work under authority. St Peter's seeks to discern this fairly, pastorally and responsibly.

4. Principles of volunteering at St Peter's

Volunteering at St Peter's should be shaped by the following principles.

Volunteers should be:

- welcomed and valued;
- given clear information about their role;
- supported by an appropriate Ministry Area Leader, staff member, clergy member or other responsible person;
- equipped and trained where needed;
- treated with dignity and fairness;
- encouraged to serve within their gifts, capacity and circumstances;

- protected from unreasonable pressure or inappropriate expectations;
- able to raise concerns appropriately;
- subject to proper safeguarding, conduct, risk and governance arrangements.

Volunteers are expected to:

- serve in a manner consistent with Christian discipleship;
- follow St Peter's Code of Conduct and relevant policies;
- act within the responsibilities and limits of their role;
- attend required training or briefing;
- respect safeguarding, confidentiality, data protection and health and safety requirements;
- communicate appropriately if they are unable to fulfil a commitment;
- work constructively with those responsible for the ministry area;
- raise concerns promptly and responsibly;
- accept guidance, correction or change where needed.

Volunteering should be offered freely. Volunteers should not be put under improper pressure to serve, continue serving, take on more than is wise, or remain in a role that is no longer suitable.

5. Ministry Role Descriptions

Where appropriate, volunteer roles should have a Ministry Role Description.

A Ministry Role Description should normally set out:

- the purpose of the role;
- the main responsibilities;
- who the volunteer reports to or works with;
- any safeguarding requirements;
- any DBS requirement;
- any training requirement;
- any expected time commitment;
- any practical or health and safety requirements;
- relevant boundaries or limitations;
- relevant policies or procedures.

Not every occasional or informal act of service will need a full written Ministry Role Description. However, roles involving children, young people, vulnerable adults, pastoral care, leadership, teaching, money, keys, confidential information, public representation, lone working or regular responsibility should normally have clear written expectations.

Ministry Role Descriptions should be consistent with the policies and safeguarding arrangements adopted by the PCC.

6. Recruitment, appointment and suitability

St Peter's seeks to encourage people into appropriate forms of service, while also recognising the need for care, discernment and proper oversight.

Depending on the role, the process may include:

- informal conversation;
- completion of a volunteer form or expression of interest;
- agreement to the relevant Ministry Role Description;
- safeguarding checks;
- DBS check where required;
- references where appropriate;
- safer recruitment process;
- training or induction;
- agreement to follow St Peter's policies;
- approval by the relevant Ministry Area Leader, staff member, Vicar, Church Administrator, Safeguarding Team, PCC or other appropriate person.

The level of process should be proportionate to the role. A person helping occasionally with refreshments will not need the same process as a person working with children, providing pastoral care, handling money, holding keys, or leading a ministry area.

In considering suitability for a role, St Peter's may take account of:

- Christian profession and maturity, where relevant;
- character and conduct;
- gifts, competence and experience;
- reliability and availability;
- ability to work with others and under appropriate authority;
- safeguarding suitability;
- training and willingness to learn;
- health, wellbeing and capacity;
- any conflicts of interest;
- the nature and public visibility of the role;
- the doctrine, ethos and ministry expectations of St Peter's.

A decision that a person is not suitable for a particular role is not a judgement on their worth, welcome or value in the church family. It may simply mean that the role is not right for them, or not right at that time.

7. Safeguarding and safer recruitment

Safeguarding is central to volunteering at St Peter's.

All volunteers must follow St Peter's Safeguarding Policy and any safeguarding requirements relevant to their role. Volunteers must report safeguarding concerns promptly through the

proper safeguarding route and must not handle safeguarding concerns merely as private disagreements, ordinary complaints or informal pastoral matters.

Roles involving children, young people or vulnerable adults, and some other roles of trust, may require safer recruitment checks, DBS checks, safeguarding training, supervision and role-specific boundaries.

Volunteers must not begin a role requiring safeguarding checks, DBS clearance, training or authorisation until the required process has been completed or explicit interim arrangements have been agreed by the appropriate responsible person.

Volunteers should not:

- act outside the agreed boundaries of their role;
- create inappropriate dependency;
- use spiritual, pastoral or personal influence to pressure or control others;
- form inappropriate relationships with those they serve;
- ignore or minimise safeguarding concerns;
- promise absolute confidentiality where there is risk of harm, abuse, coercion, criminal behaviour or safeguarding concern.

Where safeguarding concerns arise about a volunteer, St Peter's may pause, restrict or end the volunteer's role while concerns are considered. This should be done carefully, proportionately and with appropriate safeguarding, diocesan, HR or legal advice where needed.

8. Support, training and supervision

St Peter's seeks to support volunteers well.

Support may include:

- induction;
- role-specific briefing;
- safeguarding training;
- health and safety or practical training;
- pastoral support;
- team meetings;
- review conversations;
- mentoring or supervision;
- access to relevant policies, guidance and Ministry Role Descriptions.

Ministry Area Leaders and others overseeing volunteers should seek to provide clear communication, encouragement, appropriate feedback and reasonable notice of changes.

Volunteers should feel able to say when they are over-stretched, unclear about expectations, uncomfortable with a situation, or no longer able to continue in a role.

St Peter's recognises that volunteer capacity is limited. Volunteers should not be expected to compensate indefinitely for gaps in staffing, planning or leadership. Where a ministry cannot be

sustained safely or well, the appropriate response may be to reduce, pause or reshape the activity.

9. Boundaries and expectations

Volunteers should serve within the scope of their role and should seek guidance where they are unsure.

Volunteers should:

- respect personal, pastoral, emotional, physical and safeguarding boundaries;
- avoid acting beyond their competence or authority;
- avoid creating private arrangements that bypass safeguarding or accountability;
- keep appropriate records where required;
- use church communication channels appropriately;
- avoid gossip, favouritism, pressure, factional behaviour or misuse of influence;
- handle confidential information carefully;
- avoid conflicts of interest and declare them where they arise;
- treat staff, clergy, PCC members, other volunteers, church members, visitors and hirers with courtesy and respect.

Volunteers should not present themselves as speaking for St Peter's unless authorised to do so.

10. Confidentiality, data and communication

Volunteers may become aware of personal, pastoral, safeguarding, financial, employment or other confidential information.

Such information must be handled carefully and only for proper church purposes.

Volunteers should:

- follow St Peter's Data Protection Policy, Privacy Notice and Data Retention Policy;
- keep personal information secure;
- avoid unnecessary sharing of personal or confidential information;
- use ChurchSuite, email, WhatsApp, Dropbox or other systems only in ways appropriate to their role;
- avoid storing church personal data on personal devices unless authorised and secure;
- report data breaches, mistaken sharing or security concerns promptly.

Confidentiality is important, but it is not absolute. Information may need to be shared where there is a safeguarding concern, risk of harm, legal obligation, serious misconduct concern, pastoral necessity, governance responsibility or other proper reason.

11. Expenses, gifts and resources

Volunteers should not normally be out of pocket for reasonable expenses properly incurred in carrying out an agreed role, provided those expenses have been authorised and claimed in accordance with St Peter's financial procedures.

Volunteers must not use church money, property, equipment, keys, information, contacts, access, influence or reputation for improper personal advantage or for the improper advantage of another person.

Any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest should be declared in accordance with the Conflict of Interest Policy.

Significant gifts, hospitality or benefits connected with a volunteer role should be declared.

12. Health, safety and risk

Volunteers should take reasonable care for their own health and safety and for the health and safety of others.

Volunteers should:

- follow relevant health and safety, fire, first aid, food hygiene, manual handling and risk assessment arrangements;
- use equipment only where authorised, competent and safe to do so;
- report accidents, injuries, near misses, hazards or defects promptly;
- not undertake tasks they are not trained, equipped or physically able to perform safely;
- follow lone-working arrangements where relevant;
- cooperate with reasonable instructions intended to protect people, property and the good order of church activities.

Those organising groups, events, trips, activities or use of premises should ensure that appropriate risk assessment, safeguarding, supervision and practical arrangements are in place.

13. Ending or changing a volunteer role

Volunteer roles may come to an end for many reasons.

A volunteer may step back because of health, family circumstances, work, capacity, change of calling, disagreement, tiredness, loss of confidence, or simply because the role is no longer right for them.

St Peter's may also ask a volunteer to pause, change or end a role where:

- the role is no longer needed;
- the volunteer is no longer able to fulfil the role safely or effectively;
- safeguarding, conduct, health and safety, confidentiality or trust concerns arise;
- the volunteer is acting outside the boundaries of the role;
- the volunteer is unwilling to follow St Peter's policies or reasonable instructions;

- the role or ministry area is being restructured;
- the PCC, Vicar, Ministry Area Leader or other responsible person judges that change is needed.

Where possible, changes should be handled with courtesy, clarity, gratitude and pastoral care. However, St Peter's may need to act quickly where safeguarding, safety, serious conduct, legal, employment, insurance or governance concerns are involved.

Ending a volunteer role does not necessarily mean ending someone's welcome at St Peter's.

14. Concerns about volunteers

Concerns about a volunteer's conduct, suitability, boundaries, reliability, safeguarding, communication, confidentiality or performance should be raised promptly and appropriately.

Depending on the concern, the appropriate route may be:

- the relevant Ministry Area Leader;
- the Church Administrator;
- the Vicar;
- the churchwardens;
- the Parish Safeguarding Officer or Safeguarding Team;
- the PCC Standing Committee;
- the Complaints Policy;
- the Whistleblowing Policy;
- the safeguarding procedure.

Safeguarding concerns must always be handled through safeguarding procedures.

Responses to concerns may include:

- informal conversation;
- clarification of expectations;
- additional training or supervision;
- pastoral support;
- change of role;
- temporary pause from serving;
- ending a role;
- referral under safeguarding, complaints, whistleblowing, employment or other relevant procedures.

Action should be taken carefully, proportionately and with appropriate advice where needed.

15. Volunteers and employment status

Volunteers are not employees of St Peter's simply because they volunteer. Nothing in this policy is intended to create a contract of employment or a legally binding obligation between St Peter's and a volunteer.

Volunteers give their time freely and may step back from volunteering. St Peter's may also change, pause or end a volunteer role where appropriate.

Where a person is both an employee and a volunteer, care should be taken to distinguish between employment duties and voluntary service.

16. Related policies and documents

This policy should be read alongside, where applicable:

- Welcome, Dignity and Fair Treatment Policy;
- Code of Conduct;
- Safeguarding Policy;
- Safer Recruitment arrangements;
- Ministry Role Descriptions;
- Volunteer Agreement;
- Social Media Policy;
- Conflict of Interest Policy;
- Whistleblowing Policy;
- Complaints Policy;
- Data Protection Policy;
- Privacy Notice;
- Data Retention Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Food Hygiene Policy;
- Manual Handling Policy;
- Fire Evacuation Plans;
- Finance Policy and financial procedures;
- Staff Handbook and employment policies;
- relevant risk assessments and operational guidance.

17. Review

This policy will be reviewed by the PCC every three years, or sooner if required by changes in law, Church of England guidance, diocesan guidance, safeguarding requirements, parish practice, employment considerations, or governance need.

The PCC is responsible for ensuring that this policy remains faithful to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, legally responsible, pastorally wise, practically useful, and consistent with St Peter's safeguarding, governance and ministry practice.

Short public-facing summary

Volunteer Policy

Volunteers are a vital part of the life, witness and ministry of St Peter's. We are grateful for those who offer their time, gifts, energy and care in the service of Christ and his church.

This policy explains how St Peter's seeks to welcome, support, guide and oversee volunteers.

Volunteers should be treated with dignity, fairness and gratitude. They should be given clear information about their role, supported appropriately, and protected from unreasonable pressure or unclear expectations.

Volunteers are also expected to serve in a way that is consistent with Christian discipleship, St Peter's Code of Conduct, safeguarding responsibilities, health and safety, confidentiality, data protection, and other relevant policies.

Some roles require particular suitability, safeguarding checks, DBS checks, training, maturity, competence, reliability or agreement with the doctrine and ethos of St Peter's.

Not every person is suitable for every role at every time, but every person should be treated with dignity and care.

Volunteer roles may change or come to an end for many reasons. Where possible, this should be handled with clarity, gratitude and pastoral care.

Safeguarding concerns must always be reported through safeguarding procedures. Concerns about volunteer conduct or suitability should be raised promptly and appropriately.