

In March 2105 the UK Government announced the establishment of an inquiry into child sexual abuse by state and non-state organisations, chaired by Justice Goddard. At the outset of the Inquiry organisations within the scope of the Inquiry were asked with regard to their records and record keeping “to ensure that everything of potential relevance to the Inquiry is retained”.

Any records which may be relevant to the Inquiry should **NOT BE DESTROYED AND MUST BE RETAINED.**

The Church of England has issued some updated guidance on how long records should be kept. (Please note that some of the retention periods in this guidance may differ from the guidance in previous record management toolkits to Parishes, Dioceses and Cathedrals. They reflect the changing requirements in the light of non-current (historic) abuse cases and plans are progressing to update and align them.)

What type of records to keep and how long to keep them

Allegations Concerns Risk Assessments	Record Keeping	Retention
Records of child or adult protection incidents or concerns within a Parish or a family where the church either reports the concerns or is involved in supporting and monitoring the child, adult or family. This includes risk assessments and ‘agreements’.	It is essential that a record of any safeguarding allegations and concerns, and how these are handled-how the information was followed up; actions taken; decisions reached and eventual outcomes - should be kept.	<i>70 years after last contact with the individual concerned.</i>
Records that relate to Safeguarding concerns or allegations about Church Officers (anyone appointed by or on behalf of the Church to a post or role, whether they are paid or unpaid).	It is essential that a record of any safeguarding allegations and concerns, and how these are handled-how the information was followed up; actions taken; decisions reached and eventual outcomes - should be kept.	<i>75 years after employment ceases</i>
Activities	Record Keeping	Retention
Records of any children’s activities or activities for adults at risk of abuse (e.g. junior church/youth club/choirs/day care etc)	Safety risk assessments	<i>50 years after the activity ceases</i>

Employment	Record Keeping	Retention
Personnel records relating to lay workers and volunteers who do not work with children and vulnerable adults		6 years after employment ceases
Personnel records relating to lay workers and volunteers whose role involves contact with children and vulnerable adults.	Applications, references, disciplinary matters, job descriptions, training and termination documentation. It should include all documentation concerning allegations, investigations and risk assessments regardless of the findings	75 years after employment ceases
Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) disclosures obtained as part of a vetting and/or employment process	Record of: date of the check name of the person type of certificate requested certificate reference number position for which the certificate was requested actions taken. If such records are stored on a central register a cross reference must be held on the file of the individual concerned.	DBS certificate – 6 months after date of issue DBS record 75 years after employment ceases

You should also keep any information that relates to parish safeguarding leadership and governance and the development of local safeguarding practices and policy. e.g. PCC minutes, audits, safeguarding training, policy development. Responsibility for ensuring that records are retained rests with the PCC. However, the PCC may choose to delegate this responsibility to their incumbent / priest-in-charge or their parish safeguarding co-ordinator.

Factsheets available in the Church of England records management toolkit

For further guidance the Church of England publishes a number of Document Management Guides which are free to [download](#):

- What is records management
- Looking after your electronic records
- Looking after your emails
- Agreements with record offices
- Data protection
- Glossary
- Organising your records
- Looking after your paper records
- Looking after your multimedia records
- Access to records
- Copying and copyright
- Keep or Bin - The Care of your Parish Records

Further guidance

For further guidance please contact the Church of England Record Centre:

Address: 15 Galleywall Road, South Bermondsey, London, SE16 3PB.

Telephone: 020 7898 1030; Email: archives@churchofengland.org