

Longton St Andrew – Parochial Church Council

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy Safe From Harm Policy – March 2023

Introduction

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

This Policy and Procedure applies to all who have received the Bishop's Licence or Permission to work, and to all others who work in any way with children, young people and vulnerable adults in our Church and congregation.

The PCC will:

1. Appoint a **Designated Person** (Parish Safeguarding Officer) to work with the PCC and (if the person is not the Incumbent) work with the Incumbent on safeguarding matters
2. Follow the Diocesan and Parish Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Guidelines
3. Report any abuse or suspected abuse if reported or discovered
4. Have adequate insurance cover in place
5. Ensure all those whose work brings them into regular contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults are safely recruited, complete a Confidential Declaration Form and are subject to DBS clearance

For the purpose of this document, a child is anyone under the age of 18 years.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

We recognise that:

- the welfare of the child or young person is paramount
- everyone has different levels of vulnerability, and each of us may be regarded as vulnerable at some time in our lives
- all children and adults who may be vulnerable (regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity) have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse which can occur in families and communities
- domestic abuse if witnessed or overheard by a child, is a form of child abuse by the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour
- working in partnership with children, their parents (adults who may themselves be vulnerable) their carers and other agencies is essential in promoting their welfare

We will develop a safeguarding culture in our Church that:

- enables and encourages concerns to be raised and responded to openly and consistently and protects children and adults who may be vulnerable from actual and potential harm
- is child-friendly and ensures that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse
- values, listens to and respects children and adults who may be vulnerable, encouraging them to be active contributors to the Church community
- encourages adults who may be vulnerable to lead as independent a life as possible

When concerns are raised, we will:

- Respond without delay to every concern raised that a child, or adult who may be vulnerable may have been harmed, or may be at risk from harm, through abuse, harassment or bullying, or about the behavior of an adult or child
- Work with the Diocese (through the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer) and any other statutory bodies during an investigation into abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the Church community.

If abuse has occurred, we will ensure in partnership with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer and other agencies that:

- informed and appropriate pastoral care is offered to any child, young person or adult who has suffered abuse, including support to make a complaint if so desired
- supervision is provided for any member of our Church community known to have offended against a child or vulnerable adult, or to pose a risk to them
- appropriate pastoral care is offered to any member of our Church community against whom an allegation is made

In all recruitment and selection we will:

- ensure careful selection of ordained and lay ministers, voluntary workers with children and young people and adults in line with safer recruitment principles and checks
- provide supervision, support and training after appointment
- commit ourselves to support, resource, train and regularly review those who undertake work amongst all people who may be vulnerable.

In our publicity we will:

- share information about good safeguarding practice with children, parents and adults who may be vulnerable, their carers, and all those working with them

RESPONDING TO ANY CHILD OR ADULT WHO MAY BE DISCLOSING ABUSE

We will endeavor to:

- Listen carefully, and take the child or vulnerable adult seriously
- Tell the child that he/she has done the right thing by telling
- Clarify if necessary
- Say if we can what we will do next
- Make an accurate record as soon as possible in the form of a written report, recording details of time and what has been reported, and to whom the abuse has been reported

We will not:

- Promise confidentiality (we are duty bound to report all abuse to the Police and other authorities)
- Investigate
- Ask leading questions
- Repeatedly question/ask the child or adult to repeat the disclosure over & over

Imminent risk:

- If we encounter a child in a situation where the child or adult is in imminent danger, we will act immediately to secure the safety of the child or adult. We will seek the assistance of the Police and then make a referral to the Local Authority Social Care in accordance with the Child and Adult Protection Procedure below. If a child or adult needs emergency medical attention, we will seek this immediately from the emergency services. We will keep parents, if available, fully informed

CHILD AND ADULT PROTECTION PROCEDURE

We will follow the procedure below where there is concern that a child or vulnerable adult has been harmed as a result of abuse and urgent action is needed

1. If there is concern that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of harm, inform the Parish Safeguarding Officer or Incumbent who will take advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) or Local Authority Social care. **If the Incumbent is implicated, inform the DSO immediately**

2. If there is concern that a child or vulnerable adult has been harmed, immediately inform the Parish Safeguarding Officer of Incumbent or DSO, and agree who will make the referral to the Local Authority Social Care team. If no one is available, contact the Local Authority Social Care Team or Police directly.
3. Make an immediate telephone referral to the Local Authority Social Care. Make it clear from the first point of contact that you are making a child or adult protection referral
4. Describe the event or disclosure and give information about the child and family, or adult, for example the child/adult's name, date of birth, address, telephone number and GP if known.
5. Follow up your telephone call with a completed referral form (sometimes available on the Local authority website) or letter. This should be acknowledged. If not, chase it.
6. Remember that the child and family should, wherever possible, be informed and consent to the referral **unless this would put the welfare of the child or vital interests of the adult who may be vulnerable, or another person at further risk. If you have serious concerns, the absence of consent should not prevent a referral.** The Duty Social Worker will give you advice over this if necessary.
7. Be prepared to have further discussions with the social work team or the Police investigation team. Say if you do not want your details disclosed to the family
8. For out of hours referrals, contact the Emergency Social Work Team or, where urgent, the police
9. Consult the DSO at any point in the process, but in any case always ensure that the DSO is informed of the concern and actions taken

Do not delay your referral. Clergy and Diocesan officers are NOT authorised to investigate any allegations, and must never attempt to do so. Only the Police and the Local Authorities are granted such powers in law

Most situations are not emergencies

However: If a child or adult who may be vulnerable needs immediate medical help, call emergency services, and ensure that the ambulance and hospital staff are informed of any protection concerns. If it would be dangerous for the child or adult who may be vulnerable to return home, or he or she does not want to return home, and you are sufficiently concerned for their safety, contact the Emergency Social care Service of the Police. If you observe a child or adult who may be vulnerable being harmed by someone other than a family member, or you believe they are at risk of harm from someone other than a family member, you should inform the parents or carers immediately, so that an appropriate referral to the Police or Social care can be made.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS TRAINING

The Church will make every effort to ensure that Clergy, licensed workers and lay ministers, volunteers and all working with children and vulnerable adults regularly seek and obtain safeguarding training to the levels of their responsibility. All Diocesan Training should be completed once every three years.

SAFER RECRUITMENT

All Church workers with children and adults will complete and sign an application form and confidential declaration

Written references and identification will be required and will be carefully checked

A criminal disclosure (DBS) will be required in relation to all eligible roles

All Church workers with children and adults will be interviewed in relation to a role/job description or person specification

After appointment support and training will be offered.

THOSE WHO POSE A RISK TO CHILDREN (including recruitment of ex offenders)

When it is known that a member of the congregation, or someone wishing to join a congregation, has sexually abused a child or young person, or is not a sexual offender against children but nevertheless may pose a risk, we will consult the DSO, so that a safe course of action in accordance with recommended Church of England procedure can be pursued in conjunction with the relevant statutory agencies.

CARE OF SURVIVORS OF ABUSE AND THEIR FAMILIES

We will seek to work with anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry of informed pastoral care.

RECORD KEEPING AND STORAGE

Notes will be made of all safeguarding incidents involving children or adults. They will be treated confidentially and will be securely stored by the Incumbent and/or designated person. They will be retained even if the information received was judged to be malicious, unsubstantiated or unfounded. During an interregnum, the designated person will be responsible for all safeguarding records which will be passed to the incoming Incumbent

SAFE PRACTICE WITH CHILDREN

We will ensure our work with children is carried out in a 'safe' environment in accordance with Safe Parish Guidelines

- The ratio of leaders to children will comply with The Children Act 1989.
- Each group will have a minimum of 2 adults and a gender balance will be maintained if possible
- Adults will not work alone with children
- We will seek to ensure that meeting places are safe, secure and suitable for purpose
- We will be clear about boundaries with regard to touching always related to the child's needs and normally initiated by the child
- We will obtain parental/guardian permission for attendance at groups, trips, use of images (especially on the internet) and transporting children in private cars
- All those who drive children on Church-organized activities should have held a full driving licence for over 2 years which must be 'clean', ie no current points
- All cars that carry children should be comprehensively insured for both private and business use. The insured person should make sure that their insurance covers the giving of lifts relating to Church-sponsored activities

UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

If children attend our Church Services without their parents' or carers' knowledge we will welcome the child(ren) and try to establish whether their parents are aware of where they are

We will make sure an adult recruited for work with children takes care if the child and try to discover when they are due home and encourage them to keep that arrangement

Depending on the age and competence of the child, we will ring the parents, or ask the young person to ring, to gain their parents' consent to the child remaining. If the child comes regularly, we will endeavor to establish regular contact with the parents or carers.

VISITING ADULTS WHO MAY BE VULNERABLE, IN THEIR HOMES (inc Residential Homes)

Church workers will always complete an assessment of risk before visiting someone in their own home. They will always carry a mobile phone on a home visit, and ensure that someone knows where they are, and when they are expected to return. They will always call by appointment and carry identification. Where our workers need to refer the person to another agency, we will talk this through with the vulnerable adult, seeking his/her permission before passing on personal information. Our workers will always endeavor to be clear about what behaviour from the vulnerable adults is acceptable and what is not.

ORGANISATIONS HIRING CHURCH BUILDINGS OR PREMISES

The PCC is responsible for all activities and events that take place in our Church buildings or grounds which are not run directly by the PCC, and will require visiting groups to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are protected at all times, follow safe recruitment procedures, and aware of health and safety issues in the building. Visiting groups will be required to sign a hire agreement and abide by the Parish Safeguarding Policy.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ENGAGING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Children and Young People's workers should not comment on any Church activity or name anyone concerned on any form of social media. Images of any Church activities or members, especially images of children and young people may not be used in any way

E-mails, on-line chat and texting

Parental agreement should be obtained before communicating with young people.

Language should be clear and unambiguous

All conversations must be made available for viewing by the Incumbent or Safeguarding Officer.

All E-mails must be retained

In emergency, workers may offer advice and support, but avoid counseling. All such matters should be referred to the Incumbent or Safeguarding Officer.

Mobile Phones

Mobile phones should not be used except in the case of emergency

Numbers should not be given to those who are children and young people, and care should be taken in giving any number to those who are regarded as vulnerable as a dependency culture should not be encouraged

A record of all conversations should be kept

Photos should not be taken on mobile phones at any Church event or activity

All of the above should be shared with young people.

This Policy and the contained guidelines exist not only for the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults, but also for the protection of those who work with children and young people, and in pastoral care. The Parish may compile a list of addresses and phone numbers but this will not be made generally available. Copies will be kept by the Incumbent, Churchwardens, and the PCC Secretary to whom reference can be made – all requests for information from the list will be recorded.

This Policy will be reviewed annually by the PCC.