

St. Mary's Harlington Parish Church

PROMOTING A SAFER CHURCH

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults:

Policy and Procedure

This Policy and Procedure was adopted at a Parochial Church Council meeting held on 21 May 2025

It follows and is consistent with

the Church of England House of Bishops' 'Promoting a Safer Church 2017,'
'Protecting All God's Children' 4th edition 2010, and
Safer Recruitment Policy 2016 (House of Bishops)

Each person who works with children, young people and vulnerable adults will agree to abide by this policy. It will be reviewed annually and safeguarding will be a standing item on the St. Mary's Harlington PCC Agenda

Contents

1. SETTING THE CONTEXT.....	3
2. PROMOTING A SAFER CHURCH	4
For advice on all safeguarding issues including allegations or suspicions of abuse contact:	5
3. DIOCESAN, PARISH CHURCH SAFEGUARDING POLICY.....	5
4. RESPONDING TO A CHILD OR ADULT WHO MAY BE DISCLOSING ABUSE	7
5. CHILD AND ADULT PROTECTION PROCEDURE.....	8
6. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS TRAINING	9
7. SAFER RECRUITMENT	9
8. DEALING WITH THOSE WHO POSE A RISK TO CHILDREN.....	9
9. CARE OF SURVIVORS OF ABUSE AND THEIR FAMILIES	10
10. RECORD KEEPING AND STORAGE	10
11. SAFER PRACTICE WITH CHILDREN	10
12. UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN.....	11
13. VISITING ADULTS WHO MAY BE VULNERABLE, IN THEIR HOMES (including residential homes)	11
14. SOCIAL MEDIA AND IMAGES	11
15. WHISTLEBLOWING	12
16. CONTACT — WHERE THERE IS CONCERN ABOUT A CHILD OR VULNERABLE ADULT.....	13

SETTING THE CONTEXT

In October 2016 the Diocese of St Albans Diocesan Synod affirmed its commitment to safeguarding all God's people and it adopted the national policies and Practice Guidance for Safeguarding within the Church of England. This policy is based on the Church of England's Safeguarding policy and within it adopts and takes into account the House of Bishops safeguarding policy for children, young people and adults (2017) as amplified in the Parish Safeguarding Handbook (October 2018).

The care and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in Church activities is the responsibility of the whole Church. Everyone who participates in the life of the Church has a role to play in promoting a Safer Church for all.

Under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, all authorised clergy, bishops, archdeacons, licensed readers and lay workers, churchwardens and PCCs must have 'due regard' to safeguarding guidance issued by the House of Bishops (this will include both policy and practice guidance). A duty to have 'due regard' to guidance means that the person under the duty is not free to disregard it but is required to follow it unless there are cogent reasons for not doing so ('cogent' for this purpose means clear, logical and convincing.) Failure by clergy to comply with the duty imposed by the 2016 Measure may result in disciplinary action (*Promoting a Safer Church: Church of England Safeguarding Children Young People, Adults 2017*).

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. The PCC will embed into its practice the Church of England Policy which is based on **5 foundations** and **6 overarching policy commitments** that inform diocesan and parochial safeguarding guidelines and procedures

We are guided by the following **5 foundations**:

1. Gospel – being faithful to our call to share the gospel compels us to take with the utmost seriousness the challenge of: preventing abuse from happening and responding well where it has
2. Human Rights and the Law – safeguarding work is undertaken within a legislative framework supported by government guidance
3. Core Principles – welfare of the child, young person and vulnerable adult is paramount

4. Good Safeguarding Practice – includes: leadership commitment; safeguarding policy; clear lines of accountability; clear reporting procedures and record keeping and effective information sharing/ working with partner agencies
5. Learning from the past – statutory reports and independent reviews into abuse that have involved the Church of England highlight past errors and significant lessons learnt to improve safeguarding

Based on the 5 foundations outlined above we commit to the following **6 overarching policy commitments**:

1. Promoting a Safer environment and culture
2. Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the Church
3. Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation
4. Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons
5. Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons
6. Responding to those that may pose a risk to others

A copy of Promoting a Safer Church: Church of England Safeguarding Children Young People, Adults (2017) can be found at

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/cofe-policy-statement.pdf>

PROMOTING A SAFER CHURCH

Adopting the Church of England's Safeguarding Policy for Children, Young People and Adults (2017), safeguarding means the action that we take to promote a safer culture. This means we will: promote the welfare of children, young people and adults working to prevent abuse from occurring, seek to protect those that are at risk of being abused and respond well to those that have been abused.

We will take care to identify where a person may present a risk to others, offer and support them whilst taking steps to mitigate such risks.

Our church will take appropriate steps to maintain a safer environment for all and to practice fully and positively Christ's Ministry towards children, young people and adults. To respond sensitively and compassionately to their needs in order to help keep them safe from harm.

For the purposes of this document a child is anyone under the age of eighteen years.

For the purposes of this document abuse includes physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect.

It is acknowledged that abuse includes domestic violence for which there is a separate St. Mary's Harlington statement.

For advice on all safeguarding issues including allegations or suspicions of abuse contact one of the following:

Jeremy Hirst, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA)

01727 818107 07867 350886 safeguarding@stalbans.anglican.org

Martyn Hedley, Assistant DSA

01727 818106 07391 010033 safeguarding@stalbans.anglican.org

Mandy Davies, Assistant DSA

01727 818103 07771 179015 safeguarding@stalbans.anglican.org

Robert Johns, St. Mary's Harlington Parish Safeguarding Officer

01525 873214 robert@harlingtonchurch.org

Sue Spence, St. Mary's Harlington Parish Deputy Safeguarding Officer

andelsue@yahoo.co.uk

DIOCESAN, PARISH CHURCH SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Our 6 overarching safeguarding policy commitments are:

1. Promoting a safer environment and culture

We will strive to create and maintain environments that are safer for all, that promote well-being, that prevent abuse, and that create nurturing, caring conditions within the Church for children,

young people and vulnerable adults. Our church will respect all children, young people and vulnerable adults and promote their well-being.

2. Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children and vulnerable adults within the Church

We will select and vet all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the Church, in accordance with the House of Bishops safeguarding policy and practice guidance.

3. Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation

Anyone who brings any safeguarding suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation of current or non-current abuse to the notice of the Church will be responded to respectfully and in a timely manner, in line with statutory child and adult safeguarding procedures and the House of Bishops safeguarding policy and practice guidance.

4. Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons

We will endeavour to offer care and support to all those that have been abused, regardless of the

type of abuse, when or where it occurred. Those who have suffered abuse within the Church will receive a compassionate response, be listened to and be taken seriously.

5. Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons

The Church in exercising its responsibilities to suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations of abuse will endeavour to respect the rights under criminal, civil and ecclesiastical law of an accused Church Officer including the clergy. A legal presumption of innocence will be maintained during the statutory and Church inquiry processes. The Church will take responsibility for ensuring that steps are taken to protect others when any Church Officer is considered a risk to children, young people and vulnerable adults.

6. Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others

The Church, based on the message of the gospel, opens its doors to all. We will therefore endeavour to offer pastoral care and support to any member of the church community whom may present a known risk. The Church will ensure that any risk has been assessed and is being managed in a safeguarding agreement in accordance with House of Bishops policy and practice guidance.

RESPONDING TO A CHILD OR ADULT WHO MAY BE DISCLOSING ABUSE

We will ensure that when we are responding to a child or adult who may be disclosing abuse we will follow the relevant policies for: Protecting All God's Children, 2010 and Responding Well to Domestic Abuse, 2017.

We will endeavour to:

- Listen carefully, take the child or adult seriously
- Tell the child they have 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
- Refer the matter to the Parish Safeguarding Officer, or authorised minister who will liaise with the DSA

We will NOT:

- Promise unconditional confidentiality
- Investigate allegations of abuse
- Ask leading questions
- Repeatedly question, or ask the child or adult to repeat the disclosure over and 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. In emergency we will seek the assistance of the police. We will then as soon as possible inform the Parish Safeguarding Officer or authorised minister who will decide the appropriate follow-up action, including making a referral

to 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 and directly from the emergency services. We will keep parents, if available, 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 authorised minister who will take advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) or Local Authority Social Care. ***If a minister is implicated, inform the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.***

If there is concern that a child or vulnerable adult has been harmed, immediately inform the Parish Safeguarding Officer or authorised minister or DSA and agree who will make the referral to Local Authority Social Care team. In the unlikely event of no-one being available, contact the Local Authority Social Care Team or Police directly.

The person who makes the initial telephone referral to the Local Authority Social Care must make it clear from the first point of contact that you are making a child or adult protection referral. They should 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. That should then be followed up with a completed referral form (available on the Local Authority web site) or letter. This should be acknowledged. **If it is not, chase it.**

Remember that the child and family should, wherever possible, be informed about 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. 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.

For out of hours' referrals, call the Emergency Social Work Team or where urgent, the Police.

Consult with the DSA at any point in this process but in any case always ensure the DSA 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.

If anyone observes a child or adult being harmed by someone other than a family member, or believes that they are at risk of harm, or may be harmed by someone other than a family member, they should inform the parents or carers immediately, and inform the Parish Safeguarding Officer or authorised minister.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS TRAINING

The Parish will make every effort to ensure that clergy, licensed workers and lay ministers, volunteers and employees working with children and vulnerable adults regularly seek and obtain safeguarding training to the level of their responsibility. Clergy and Readers should attend the relevant Diocesan Safeguarding training. Refresher training should be undertaken once every three years.

SAFER RECRUITMENT

All those working with unaccompanied children and those making pastoral visits to adults will

- Be interviewed and identification will be required and will be carefully checked
- A criminal disclosure will be required in relation to all eligible roles
- Any 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

There will be a separate policy in relation to Recruitment of Ex-Offenders to paid or voluntary positions.

DEALING WITH THOSE WHO POSE A RISK TO CHILDREN

When it is known that a member of the congregation, or someone wishing to join the congregation, has abused a child or young person, especially if this has been sexual abuse, or that person is not a convicted offender against children but nevertheless may pose a risk, the Parish

through the Parish Safeguarding Officer or authorised minister **will consult with the DSA**, 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 authorised minister or designated person. During an interregnum, the designated person will be responsible for all safeguarding records which will be shared with the incoming minister.

SAFER PRACTICE WITH CHILDREN

We will ensure our work with children is carried out in a 'safe' environment in accordance with Parish Safeguarding Handbook guidelines:

- The ratio of leaders to children will comply with diocesan guidelines as summarised in section 11.3 of the Parish Safeguarding Handbook (October 2018 version)
- Each group will have a minimum of two adults and a gender balance will be maintained if possible
- Adults will not work alone with children
- We will seek to ensure meeting places are safe, secure and suitable for purpose
- We will be clear about boundaries with regard to touching and comply with the Parish Safeguarding Handbook guidelines (section 11.2 in the October 2018 version)
- We will obtain parental/guardian permission for attendance at groups, trips, use of images and transporting children in private cars
- All those who drive children on church-organised activities should be authorised by an authorised minister or Parish Safeguarding Officer

- All cars that carry children should be comprehensively insured. 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 appropriate adult takes care of the child and try to discover when they are due home and encourage them to keep to 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 the parents' consent to the child remaining. If the child comes regularly, we will endeavour to establish regular contact with the parents or carers.

VISITING ADULTS WHO MAY BE VULNERABLE, IN THEIR HOMES (including residential homes)

Anyone visiting a vulnerable adult will make 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.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND IMAGES

We will not make contact with children or young people directly by social media. All contact will be made with the parents. As advised in the Parish Safeguarding Handbook, The PCC must approve the use of social media and mobile phones by the church. Where online groups set up on the church's behalf, the PCC must ensure there is a named person to whom all workers are accountable. The named person must be a church officer.

We will always obtain consent for the use of images of people in social media and on the church's website. We note the requirement in section 11.3 of the Parish Safeguarding Handbook for written parental consent to be obtained for the use of images of children.

WHISTLEBLOWING

If anyone has concerns about the behaviour of a member of the church, they should refer the matter to the Parish Safeguarding Officer or authorised minister. If there are concerns about the behaviour of an authorised minister or Parish Safeguarding Officer they should raise this with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, Archdeacon or Bishop.

**CONTACT — WHERE THERE IS CONCERN ABOUT A CHILD OR
VULNERABLE ADULT**

Central Bedfordshire	safeguarding children and young people	Office hours	0300 3008585
		Out of office hours	0300 3008123
Central Bedfordshire	safeguarding vulnerable adults	Office hours	0300 3008122
		Out of office hours	0300 3008123

For families living in area covered by Bedford or Luton Borough Councils contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) as follows

North Bedfordshire	All safeguarding matters	Office hours	01234 718700
		Out of office hours	0300 3008123
Luton	All safeguarding matters	Office hours	01582 547653
		Out of office hours	0300 3008123

Other useful numbers:

Childline	0800 1111
NSPCC	0808 800 5000
National Domestic Abuse Helpline	0808 2000 247
Samaritans Helpline	116 123
Action on Elder Abuse Helpline	080 8808 8141
THIRTY ONE:EIGHT (formerly Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service)	0303 003 11 11

If a child is in serious danger, phone 999

If any of these options are taken, then please *email the details to the Diocesan Safeguarding office:*

Jeremy Hirst safeguarding@stalbans.anglican.org or

Martyn Hedley safeguarding@stalbans.anglican.org

Mandy Davies safeguarding@stalbans.anglican.org