

**PCC Policy on Safeguarding for Children**

**Background**

This Policy was originally written in response and with regard to the Child Protection policy document of the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England (1999). The policy and procedures detailed were first agreed by the PCC on 14th May 2001 and are reviewed annually. The reviews take account of the Diocesan Policy *God's Children: Our Diocese (fourth revision – Nov 2011)*. This PCC policy envisages that the incumbent acts as the parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator referred to in section 7.5 of the Diocesan Policy.

This policy was last reviewed in June 2013.

It is intended to ensure that the congregation of St Mary's are aware of the existence of this policy and that all volunteers and workers have a copy. Any organisation using Church premises for activities for children and young people are expected to have their own safeguarding policy.

**Mission Statement**

The P.C.C of the Parish of St Mary's Lapworth gives paramount importance to the nurture and care of young people. We value all the members of our church and parish and wish to be open and clear in our intentions and in recognition of our role in protecting children and young people. We recognise our responsibility to guard against the possibility of physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children and young people by persons who may be acting in the name of our parish.

We therefore intend to:

- Raise awareness of aspects of child protection as a vital part of good practise for all new and current volunteers or workers who are involved with children and young people.
- Create a safe and secure environment in which children and young people are valued and feel confident to ask for help.

We will establish workable procedures to enable all aspects of the policy to be followed with regard to:

- 1) Checking volunteers and workers
- 2) Guidance towards creating a safe environment
- 3) Reporting and informing
- 4) Supporting children and adults
- 5) Known child abusers attending church

## **1) Checking volunteers and workers**

### **Procedures**

All new and current volunteers and workers who come into direct contact with children will:

- Meet with the incumbent to discuss this policy
- Be required to sign the declaration form provided by the House of Bishops Confidential Declaration Form (2004)
- Comply with any necessary checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DSB), formerly known as CRB checks.
- Provide appropriate identification papers for such checks, the form to be endorsed by the incumbent stating these have been seen.
- Provide written references as required.
- Receive an outline description of the role and responsibilities he/she will undertake
- Receive appropriate initial training as necessary
- Be required to agree to an appropriate probationary period followed by a review

The Bishop's Safeguarding Children Adviser will be contacted through the Bishop's Chaplain if there are any issues arising from these procedures.

Volunteers and workers to which this policy will apply are: -

- o Church Wardens
- o Choir Master and any assistants
- o Bell Tower Captain and any assistants
- o Sunday School teachers and helpers
- o Verger

The incumbent will hold all declaration forms. During an interregnum the forms will be passed to a Deanery representative and then to the new incumbent. Churchwardens will take responsibility for any new volunteers or workers.

## **2) Guidance towards creating a safe environment**

It is advisable for all adults: -

- To regularly re-appraise their practices and relationships with young people.
- To ensure that relationships are appropriate to the age and gender of the young people involved.
- To ensure that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation.
- To minimise situations where abuse can occur.

### **Procedures**

- Staffing ratios are recommended as follows:
  - Age Ratio
  - 0-2 year 1 adult to 3 children
  - 2-3 year 1 adult to 4 children
  - 3-5 year 1 adult to 8 children ,

3-5 year 1 adult to 8 children  
5-7 year 2 adults to 20 children  
8 year+ 2 adults to 20 children

- Whenever possible activities planned will allow for at least two adults workers or volunteers to be present
- Volunteers under 18 years will only assist an adult. They will not be left in charge of a group of children
- We will ensure a safe physical environment. Health and safety regulations are to be followed. Basic first aid facilities are available and an accident book is kept.
- Opportunities for training about child abuse protection and good practise will be made available to all volunteers and workers.

### **3) Reporting and informing**

It is important that all people that work and have contact with children and young people understand that they are acting in the name of St Mary's Church Lapworth and do so as a responsibility delegated to them on behalf of the whole congregation. We are therefore all responsible for providing an atmosphere within which young people can feel safe enough to communicate and express themselves.

#### **Procedures**

We will therefore:

- Make it clear that we are available to listen and support
- Follow up any concerns regarding possible signs of abuse and consider possible explanations.
- Note any significant changes in attitude or behaviour.
- Keep accurate dated records of concerns and / or subsequent disclosures. NB this list to be held by the incumbent.
- Take specific action as necessary, if we feel that the child is at risk due to abuse.

#### **Specific Action**

(1) Specific concerns about a child should be raised with the Rector or Churchwardens in the first instance.

(2) As appropriate the Rector or the Churchwardens will notify the Bishop's Chaplain, the Bishop's Safeguarding Children Adviser, police and social services.

(3) It is not appropriate to discuss any aspect of concern with any journalist.

We acknowledge that abuse can happen in all walks of life to women, men, boys, girls and babies.

Reports of abuse may come from:

- Children or young people
- Adult survivors who recall abuse
- Abusers themselves

#### **4) Supporting children and adults**

As required, we intend to provide pastoral care in order to

- Support survivors of abuse
- Offer reassurance and support for all concerned
- Assist offenders to be accountable for their actions

We will take guidance from the safeguarding policy documents of the House of Bishops and from the Birmingham Diocesan policy *God's Children: Our Diocese*. Support and advice will be requested from the Bishop's Safeguarding Children Adviser (contacted through the Bishop's Chaplain) who will be kept informed of all concerns.

The PCC and congregation of St Mary's Church Lapworth will show support to ensure relationships are fostered to ensure that the children and young people in our care are safeguarded and nurtured physically, emotionally and spiritually.

#### **5) Known child abusers attending church**

We recognise, with regret, that there are individuals who abuse children and that they may be part of our church community. However, the safety of children and young people must always be paramount. This is not to exclude people from the love of God through the church but to recognise that these people will need support and boundaries.

There is a range of terminology used currently; this document will use the term *abuser*.

Abusers in the church may range from:

- Those who have been convicted or cautioned
- Those who are known to the criminal justice system
- Those who are known to others but where no action has been taken
- Those who are not known

They may or may not be still abusing.

**Remember** - there are four categories of abuse; physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.

**Remember** - abusers are practised in deception, and may be attending church in order to gain access to children by building relationships with them.

The incumbent might learn about the abuser from:

- The police, probation service, social services or a rehabilitation clinic
- The prison service or the courts
- The Archdeacon or Bishop
- The incumbent of the previous church
- The Disclosure and Barring Service
- The abuser in person
- A member of the congregation

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality of this sensitive information is of prime importance for everyone involved. The boundaries need to be set with the Bishop's Safeguarding Children Adviser and these will be different in every situation.

Outside formal sacramental confession these boundaries may need to be broken if the incumbent thinks children or young people are at risk. It is imperative that children and young people are safe. Consideration also has to be given to the safety of the abuser.

Because of the changing face of church officers and congregations the issue of 'who knows' will be constantly reviewed.

It is important to recognise that such knowledge is a burden for those who hold it and they will need support.

It is important that anyone involved in the process seeks advice and guidance on the nature of abuse and abusers.

### **What the incumbent must do immediately**

- Find out from the person giving you this information what contact they have with the abuser and what safeguards have been put in place
- Ensure that the abuser is not doing any work in the church that brings them into contact with children and young people and if they are, stop this immediately
- Consider whether children and young people outside the church context are at immediate risk - if so contact social services
- Contact the Bishop's chaplain who will inform the Bishop and the Bishop's Safeguarding Children Adviser. The adviser will advise you on the future action you will need to take.
- Don't try to deal with it on your own. Get support and help for yourself.
- If the abuser tells you they are still abusing you must follow the safeguarding procedures

## **What happens next**

Every situation may be different.

when the Bishop's Safeguarding Children Adviser is contacted he/she will offer appropriate advice and support and a way forward.

An assessment of the risks will be carried out and a written contract with the abuser may result.

The Bishop's Safeguarding Children Adviser may also have contact with the statutory authorities.

If an allegation is made against the abuser, safeguarding procedures should be followed.

If the abuser leaves the church the incumbent will consider whether to:

- Inform any agency that has been involved
- Inform any referring agency.
- Inform the incumbent/minister of any new church that the abuser may be attending

The incumbent will inform the Bishop's Chaplain and seek advice from the Bishop's Safeguarding Children Adviser.

All of the above applies to abuse whether current or historic.