

**SAFEGUARDING POLICY and GUIDANCE
for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults
(Promoting a Safer Church)**

**The Parish Church of All Saints Leighton Buzzard
The Parish Office, Church Square, Leighton Buzzard, Beds LU7 1AE**

Parish Safeguarding Officer: Bill Webb (07801 431581)
Deputy Safeguarding Officers: Stacey Major (07980 342867)
Lindsay Bevis (07885 528187)

The following policy was approved at the Parochial Church Council (PCC) meeting held on 11th July 2024.

Purpose: To ensure the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults who attend All Saints and of adults who work with them on behalf of the Parochial Church Council (PCC). We are committed to a policy, which we hope will minimise the opportunities for abuse and for false allegations of abuse.

Within the Kingdom of God, children matter in their own right and are to be taken seriously. Clergy and laity who work with children within the Church in any paid or voluntary capacity need to operate within a carefully thought out framework of good policy and practice which will ensure that children and vulnerable adults are safeguarded and nurtured physically and emotionally as well as spiritually. The highest professional standards will be maintained in all pastoral, counselling, educational, worship and recreational situations.

All Saints Church is a supporter of the Mothers' Union "Rise Up Against Domestic Abuse" initiative, contact details for which are available in church.

In accordance with the Church of England Safeguarding Policy All Saints church is committed to:

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

All Saints Parish will:

- Create a safe and caring place for all.
- Have a named Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) to work with the incumbent and the PCC to implement policy and procedures.
- Safely recruit, train and support all those with any responsibility for children, young people and adults to have the confidence and skills to recognise and respond to abuse.
- Ensure that there is appropriate insurance cover for all activities involving children and adults undertaken in the name of the parish.
- Display in church premises and on the Parish website the details of who to contact if there are safeguarding concerns or support needs.
- Listen to and take seriously all those who disclose abuse.
- Take steps to protect children and adults when a safeguarding concern of any kind arises, following House of Bishops guidance, including notifying the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) and statutory agencies immediately.

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- Offer support to victims/survivors of abuse regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred.
- Care for and monitor any member of the church community who may pose a risk to children and adults whilst maintaining appropriate confidentiality and the safety of all parties.
- Ensure that health and safety policy, procedures and risk assessments are in place and that these are reviewed annually.
- Review the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Practices at least annually.

Each person who works within this church community will agree to abide by this policy and the guidelines established by this church.

Responsibilities

The PCC appoint the Safeguarding Officers, who ensure the Leaders/Organisers of the various groups are aware of policy requirements and will provide support. Leaders/Organisers for applicable Groups/Activities are responsible for the implementation of the policy. Clergy and Safeguarding Officers have specific responsibilities in connection with dealing with allegations.

The PCC is responsible for reviewing this policy and associated procedures annually and to ensure that Statutory Requirements are met. It also must have safeguarding as a standing item on its agenda, as well as ensure a report is made annually to the APCM.

What is Child Abuse?

“Child” means a person under 18. There are four categories of abuse:

- Neglect (failure to protect the child from exposure to danger or carry out important aspects of care)
- Physical injury
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse

These may occur separately or in combination. Where abuse occurs, it is usually perpetrated by someone known to and trusted by the child.

What is Vulnerable Adults Abuse?

A person over 18 who is unable to care for themselves /protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation due to

- Mental health or learning difficulties
- Visual or hearing impairment
- Disability or ill health
- Age or frailty
- An addiction

and /or also for those who suffer from physical, sexual, psychological, financial, neglect, discriminatory and domestic abuse.

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Practical Guidelines

Appointments

- No person under 18 years of age will be appointed as leader of any young people's groups.
- All applicants will be asked to complete a Confidential Declaration form and provide independent references from someone who holds a position of trust in the community.
- An interview by the Vicar and Co-ordinator responsible for the group will take place, where the person should be given a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities.

The appointment of all leaders is conditional upon an enhanced level by the Disclosure and Barring Service. Adults volunteering to be leaders or helpers of an applicable group will be asked to contact the registered Recruiter and make an application on a confidential online form.

The requirement for clearance by the DBS for work in the church applies irrespective of whether a person has DBS clearance for professional or voluntary work in other sphere or organisations unless it is registered as portable.

Home Visits

Where any member of the church is to visit a vulnerable person at home in an official capacity, such as for Home Communion, this must be logged in advance with the parish office, and must have proper DBS clearance via the church.

Training

Leaders should expect to receive training for their ministry within the parish. They will also be expected to take part in approved diocesan or wider basic training courses if required.

Insurance

The PCC is responsible for arranging adequate insurance cover for groups and their activities at "scheduled" meeting-times and venues. The insurance cover may extend to certain meeting and activities outside of these times. Failure to follow this policy can make our insurance void and lay both the PCC and the individuals open to legal action and potential costs.

Minimising Opportunities for Abuse with Children

- A minimum of two leaders, each of whom must have a valid DBS certificate, and preferably one male and one female, shall be available during meeting times and external visits of applicable Groups for the duration of an applicable Activity. This applies to individual training, such as bellringing or musical tuition and exams.
- For external trips, such as bellringing at an away church, where possible, the child should also be accompanied by a parent or member of the child's family.
- Where a parent is not available and an adult of the same gender as the child is not available, the Parish Safeguarding Officer or a Deputy must pre-approve which leaders will attend.
- Children should not be left alone with one adult and where an adult is leading a sub-group, they should be easily observable by another nearby.
- Applicable Groups must never be left unattended.
- Groups shall maintain a register of attendance and contact details where applicable.

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- Written consent shall be obtained from Parents or Guardians for activities outside the normal meeting place of an applicable Group.
- Photographs must not be taken unless parents or guardians have given prior permission.
- If photographs are to be displayed, no means of identification will be published unless for a specific event. Parents must have given their consent for their child to appear (parents/guardians of members of the choir must have signed a choir consent form).
- No person without DBS clearance should be given sole charge of an individual or groups of children/young people out of eyesight of an appointed leader.

Dealing with Allegations Associated with Children

All leaders and helpers must be aware of the following guidance notes if an allegation of abuse is made or if abuse is discovered or if a situation arises, with which they are unhappy. The parent of the child must be informed, unless or course the parent is the abuser, or if it is suspected that, the parent is condoning the abuse. The Diocesan Safeguarding Officer and the person appointed by the PCC must be informed as soon as possible. This may relate to abuse within the Church or outside. In some circumstances or in the case where the Child Protection Officer is not available it may be appropriate to contact the Police or Social Services. Different situations call for different actions. The Diocesan Safeguarding Officer is Jez Hirst on 01727 818107, or if no response on that number, and the matter is urgent, telephone no 07867 350886. Report only abuse of a physical or sexual nature that requires immediate action. His email address is safeguarding@stalbans.anglican.org.

DO believe the person making an allegation or reporting their concerns. The overriding consideration must be to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child or vulnerable adult.

DO be supportive. It is important to make the person feel respected and listened to. Be particularly careful not to exhibit disapproval or disbelief.

DO NOT promise to keep an allegation confidential. The Church is required to alert the Diocesan Department on any report of abuse and could be held responsible for the consequences of failing to do so. They will then decide whether to inform the statutory groups etc

DO listen, rather than directly questioning them.

DO NOT conduct an investigation. This is a job for the professionals and to do so may lead to the evidence of the child or young persons, where criminal proceedings are being considered, to be inadmissible.

DO make a written record of the report of an incident as soon as possible after the event. Known facts should be distinguished from allegation and opinion. Those present, times and locations must be noted. This record must be signed, dated, and kept to be used as potential evidence.

DO deal with all concerns with Adults who are vulnerable.
