



Clapham Parish Church

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults: Policy and Procedure – Nov 2025

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Safeguarding officer and Reverend

This Policy and Procedure was adopted
at a Parochial Church Council meeting held on
It follows and is consistent with the Church of England House of Bishops' "Protecting All
God's Children" 2010, "Promoting a Safer Church" 2017 and "Practice Guidance: Safer
Recruitment" 2016

(Church of England and Methodist Church)

*Each person who works with children and vulnerable adults
will agree to abide by this policy.*

It will be reviewed annually, accepted and written in the minutes of the PCC.

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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 all others who work with children and young people and vulnerable adults in our Parish.

The term 'Parish' is used to denote the PCC and Incumbent who are together responsible for ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented.

The PCC will:

- 1 Appoint a **Designated Person** to work with the Incumbent on safeguarding matters
- 2 Follow the **Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedures**
- 3 Report any abuse or suspected abuse if discovered.
- 4 Have adequate insurance cover in place
- 5 Ensure all those whose work brings them into regular contact with children and vulnerable adults are Safely Recruited, complete a Confidential Declaration Form and are subject to a DBS (disclosure and barring service)

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

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

Chrissy Gibbs - 01234 342721 or 07967142570 (Parish Safeguarding Officer)
Rev Stephen Liley - 01234 352814

1 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 all 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, and adults who may 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 encourage concerns to be raised and responded to openly and consistently and protects children and adults who may be vulnerable from actual or 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 behaviour of an adult or child
- work with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO from hereon) and the appropriate statutory bodies during an investigation into abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the church community
- challenge any abuse of power especially by anyone in a position of trust

If abuse has occurred, we will ensure in partnership with the DSO 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 and paid workers with children and young people and adults in line with safer recruitment principles and checks
- provide supervision, support and training.
- commit ourselves to support, resource train and regularly review those who undertake work amongst 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.

2 Responding to a child or adult who may be disclosing abuse

We will endeavour to:

- Listen carefully, take the child or vulnerable adult seriously
- Tell the child s/he has done the right thing by telling
- Clarify if necessary
- Say, if appropriate, what will happen next
- Make an accurate record as soon as possible*

We will not

- Promise confidentiality
- Investigate
- Ask leading questions
- Repeatedly question/ask the child or adult to repeat the disclosure.

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 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, fully informed, (*notwithstanding paragraph 6 on page 6 below*).

3 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.***
2. If there is concern that a child or vulnerable adult has been harmed, immediately inform the Parish Safeguarding Officer or Incumbent or DSO and agree who will make the referral to 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 web site) or letter. This should be acknowledged. If it is not, chase it.
- 6 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.
- 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, call the Emergency Social Work Team or where urgent, the Police **(SEE table below under Section 4)**
- 9 Consult with the DSO at any point in this process but in any case always ensure 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 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 or 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.

4 Who to Contact if where there is worry about a child or adult

Bedford Borough

CHILDREN	Contact Number
Children's Services (<i>Integrated Front Door</i> , formerly MASH)	01234 718700
Children's Services (<i>Integrated Front Door</i> - Out of Hours)	0300 300 8123
ADULTS	
Adult Social Care (Safeguarding Team)	01234 276222
Adult Social Care (Safeguarding Team - Out of Hours)	0300 300 8123
POLICE 24hrs	101

Local Safeguarding Children Board Link multiagency@bedford.gov.uk

Adult: adult.protection@bedford.gov.uk

Childline	0800 1111
NSPCC Freephone National Helpline	0808 800 5000

DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING OFFICER (DSO) – Jeremy Hirst

Tel: 01727 818107 Mobile: 07867 350886 email: safeguarding@stalbans.anglican.org

5 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 should attend the Diocesan Safeguarding Training Courses, and Refresher training once every three years.

6 Safer Recruitment

- All Volunteers & employees must receive a role/job description and complete Basic and Foundation Safeguarding Training.
- All church workers with children and adults will complete and sign an application form and confidential self-declaration form.
- Written references and identification will be required and will be carefully checked.
- A criminal disclosure 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.

7 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 sexually abused a child or young person, or is not a sexual offender against children but nevertheless may pose a risk, we will consult with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, 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.

8 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.

9 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 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.

10 Safer 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 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) 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 and transporting children in private cars
- All Leaders who drive children on church-organized activities should have held a full Driving licence for over two years, which must be "clean" i.e. with no current points.
- All Leaders using their own cars to 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. Ideally there should be two adults in a car with a child/children, or travelling in convoy if only one adult per car, and if at all possible avoid the situation of there only being one adult and one child in a car at a time, except *in extremis*.

11 Unaccompanied Children

If children attend our church services without their parents' or carers' knowledge, we will welcome the child/children 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 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.

12 Visiting adults who may be vulnerable, in their homes (including residential homes)

Church workers will always complete an assessment of risk before visiting someone in their own home. They will arrange an appointment prior to visiting, and always carry a mobile phone

on a home visit, ensuring that someone knows where they are and when they are expected to return. 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 endeavour to be clear about what behaviour from the vulnerable adults is acceptable and what is not.

13 Bell Ringing

The PCC will appoint the tower captain and others who are likely to be in charge of ringing at any time. All Tower Captains and ringers are expected to abide by the Diocesan Guidance “Safeguarding Children and Young people who are Bell Ringers” which follows the Child Protection policy of the Central Council for Bell Ringers. In particular, no adults will work alone with children and young people, at least one adult should be in calling distance at all times and instruction should be given with minimum physical contact as set out in paragraph 6 of the Diocesan Policy. All Tower Leaders (Captains) and Ringing Trainers must have a valid current appropriate level DBS check and have attended safeguarding training, and follow the Guide *‘Practice to Perfect’* with regard to training, safeguarding and organisation of bell ringing.

14 Organizations hiring Church Building or Premises

In relation to all activities and events which are not run directly by the church but which take place in church buildings or grounds the responsibility for implementing safeguarding policies rests with the hiring organisation and not with the PCC. However, the PCC needs to take reasonable steps to ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are being practised by the hiring organisation. The PCC will require visiting groups to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are protected at all times, follow safe recruitment procedures, and are 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.

15 Social Media and Engaging with Young People

Children and Young people’s workers should be familiar with the full policy set out in Section 12 of the Parish Safeguarding Handbook 2018 – page 47ff

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 a worker’s supervisor.
- Workers may provide advice and support, but avoid counselling.

Mobile Phones

- Workers will be allocated a dedicated work phone where applicable
- They should use group texts wherever possible
- There should be an agreed length of time for conversations and a curfew e.g. no Communication between 10.00pm and 7.00am
- Conversations causing concern should be saved and passed to supervisor
- Photos should only be taken in accordance with safeguarding guidance
- Images should only be downloaded to a church computer

All of the above should be shared with young people.