

Parish of St George and St Barnabas Beckenham

Safeguarding Guidelines Children & Vulnerable Adults

The Parish of St George and St Barnabas, Beckenham adopts the safeguarding policy and guidance of the Church of England. The safeguarding guidelines in this document are intended as an aid to the staff and the congregation at St Georges and St Barnabas in interpreting Church of England safeguarding policy and are not intended to replace them.

Parish of St George and St Barnabas Beckenham Safeguarding Guidelines.

1.0 Introduction

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.

House of Bishops, Promoting a Safer Church, 2017

2.0 Children and Vulnerable Adults.

All children and young persons under the age of 18 are potentially vulnerable. As an organisation the Church has a legal responsibility under Section 11 of the Children's Act (2004) to protect children and young children from harm / abuse. This includes a legal safeguarding responsibility to report any concerns, and follow up any accusations of abuse.

Adults may be vulnerable for a number of reasons. The Church has a responsibility under the Care Act (2014) to ensure vulnerable adults are safeguarded. An adult may be vulnerable due to being:

- lacking in mental Capacity as defined by the Mental Capacity Act 2005.
- frail elderly.
- mentally ill as defined by the Mental Health Act.
- under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- physically challenged
- affected by a sensory deficit e.g. loss of hearing or eye sight.

3.0 Recruitment and Training for those working with Children and Vulnerable Adults.

Anyone working with children or vulnerable adults must be recruited in line with the Church of England's "Practice Guidance: Safe Recruitment".

Persons appointed to roles working with children and vulnerable adults at St George's must:

- Normally have regularly attended St Georges church for at least 6 months.
- Give two references if they have attended St George's for less than 12 months.
- Sign a Self-declaration form covering any convictions, police investigations against them.
- Agree to a DBS checked.
- Agree to complete the Church of England safeguarding training within 3 months of commencing duties.

4.0 Individual Workers with Children and Young Persons

The Diocese of Rochester (2016) have issued a safeguarding code of practice to assist individuals working with children and young persons.

You Should:

- Treat all young people with respect and dignity;
- Ensure that your own language, tone of voice and body language is respectful;
- Avoid situations where you are one to one with a child, work within sight of another adult;
- Respond warmly to a child that needs comforting, but making sure there are other adult around;
- Ensure another adult is informed if a child needs to be taken to the toilet; toilet breaks should be organised for young children;
- If any activity requires physical contact, ensure the child and parents are aware of this and its nature beforehand;
- Obtain consent from children and parents for any images taken;
- Follow St George's Social Media Policy when working with any form of social media;

You Should Not:

- Initiate physical contact;
- Invade a child's privacy while washing and toileting;
- Play rough, physically or sexually provocative games;
- Use any form of physical punishment;
- Be sexually suggestive about a child even in fun;
- Touch a child inappropriately or obtrusively;
- Scapegoat, ridicule or reject a child, group or adult;
- Permit abuse peer activities, e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying;
- Show favouritism to one child or a group;

- Allow a child or young person to involve you in excessive attention seeking that is overtly physical or sexual in nature;
- Give lifts to children in your car. In a real emergency transport child in back of car and try to have another adult present;
- Smoke tobacco in the presence of children;
- Drink alcohol when responsible for young people;
- Share sleeping accommodation with children;
- Invite a child to your home alone;
- Arrange social occasions with children (other than family members) outside organised group occasions.
- Allow unknown adults access to children. Visitors should always be accompanied by a known person.
- Make friends with children on personal social media sites. (See St George's Social Media Policy).

5.0 Acting upon safeguarding concerns.

Where we suspect neglect or abuse has taken place, or an allegation of neglect or abuse has been made the Church is legally obliged to act. Reporting may come in the form of a disclosure from the person abused, may come from a report from another member of the church, or from your observations / concerns

5.1 Types of abuse

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Financial abuse
- Discriminatory abuse
- Domestic abuse
- Self neglect or self injury.
- Institutional abuse
- Spiritual abuse.
- Digital abuse.

For further details of these categories of abuse see Appendix 1

5.2 Policy to be followed if there are safeguarding disclosures, allegations, complaints or suspicions.

It is essential for the Church to have a procedure in place for dealing promptly with safeguarding allegations and suspicions of abuse in line with our Diocese policy.

Key points:

- If a child asks to talk to you confidentially DO NOT promise confidentiality. You have a duty to refer a child or young person who is at risk.
- Take all safeguarding allegations, suspicions and concerns seriously.
- Make a written record of what was said in any disclosures using exact words if possible. Write your name, sign and date. Also enter time and location of disclosure and details of anyone else who was present.
- Report immediately to St Georges Church safeguarding office or Rector. If these are unavailable report to Church Wardens.
- If there is somebody at immediate risk the police or social services should be informed at once. Contact details can be found on the Church notice board.
- DO NOT commence any form of investigation.
- DO NOT approach the person the complaint has been made against.

For further guidelines see Appendix 2

Once the safeguarding concern has been reported to the Church's Safeguarding Officer, Rector, or Church Wardens they will refer the matter to the Diocese safeguarding team who will initiate any investigation and follow up action. (Appendix 3)

Safeguarding incidents must be reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor within 24 hours.

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Appendix 1 - Types of Abuse.

Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented, or cannot consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to or exploitation of, the individual. Harm is what results from mistreatment or abuse.

Physical abuse

This may include:

Hitting, slapping, scratching;

Pushing, shaking, or rough handling;

Assault and battery;

Restraining without a justifiable reason;

Inappropriate and/or unauthorized use of medication;

Deprivation of food, clothing, warmth and health care needs; and

Inappropriate sanctions.

Sexual abuse

This may include:

Any form of sexual activity with a child or young person.

“Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (e.g. rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.”

(HM Government, Working Together to Safeguard Children, London, Stationery Office, 2015)

Sexual activity which an **adult** cannot or has not consented to or has been pressured into.

Sexual activity which takes place when the adult client is unaware of the consequences or risks involved;

Rape or attempted rape;

Sexual harassment.

Non-contact abuse such as taking inappropriate images, voyeurism or exposure to pornography.

Taking advantage of a position of trust or power.

Emotional or psychological abuse

This may include:

Verbal abuse;

Humiliation and ridicule;

Threats of punishment, abandonment, intimidation or exclusion from services;

Isolation or withdrawal from services or support networks;

Deliberate denial of religious or cultural needs; and

Financial abuse

This may include:

Misuse or theft of money;

Fraud and/or extortion of material assets;

Misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits; and

Exploitation or pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance.

Neglect and acts of omission

This may include:

Ignoring nutritional or physical care needs;

Failure to protect from danger:

Failure to allow access to care or equipment for functional independence;

Failure to allow access to appropriate health, social care or educational services;

Neglect of accommodation, heating, lighting etc.;

Failure to provide privacy and dignity;

Discriminatory abuse

Discrimination on any grounds of age, sex, race, colour, language, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, disability.

Domestic abuse

Home Office Definition 2025:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse perpetrated by those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.”

Self neglect or self injury

Self-neglect is any failure of an adult to take care of him or herself that causes, or is reasonably likely to cause within a short period of time, serious physical, mental or emotional harm or substantial damage to or loss of assets. Self-neglect can happen as a result of an individual's choice of lifestyle, or the person may be depressed, have poor health, have cognitive (memory or decision making) problems, or be physically unable to care of themselves. Often, the cases which give rise to the most concern are those where a vulnerable adult refuses help and services and is seen to be at grave risk as a result. If an agency is satisfied that the vulnerable adult has the capacity to make an informed decision, then that person has the right to refuse services.

Appendix 2 - Handling disclosures of abuse.

Receive:

- Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief
- Accept what is being said without judgement
- Take it seriously

Reassure:

- Reassure them, but only so far as is honest and reliable. Don't make promises that you can't be sure to keep, e.g. "I'll stay with you" or "everything will be all right now"
- Don't promise confidentiality – you have a duty to report your concerns.
- Tell them that you will need to tell some people, but only those whose job it is to safeguard
- Acknowledge how difficult it must have been to talk
- Never agree to keep secrets – be honest
- Do reassure them that he or she is right to tell

React:

- Listen quietly, carefully and patiently
- Do not investigate, interrogate or decide if they are telling the truth
- Don't ask leading questions, e.g. "What did he do next?" (This assumes he did).
- Do ask open questions like "Is there anything else that you want to tell me?"
- Do not criticise the alleged abuser
- Do not ask them to repeat what they have told you to another person. Explain what you have to do next and whom you have to talk to.

Record:

- Make some very brief notes at the time and write them up in detail as soon as possible
- Do not destroy your original notes in case they are required by the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser or the statutory authorities
- Record the date, time, place, words used and how they appeared to you. Record the actual words used, including any swear words or slang
- Draw a diagram to indicate the position of any marks or to explain complex situations (such as family relationships) if this would be helpful
- Record statements and observable things, not your interpretations or assumptions – keep it factual
- Do not assume anything – don't speculate or jump to conclusions

Appendix 3 - Actions to be taken by Parish Safeguarding Officer, Rector, Church Wardens

1 Key points:

- 1.1 It is vital to keep a record of any issues and the decisions made as well as the rationale for either taking action or deciding not to take action. The referee should ensure there is a detailed written record of concerns or allegations. How received (verbally, by phone, text) and location. Where possible such records must be in words of informant. They must be factual avoid subjective statements or opinions. Records should include date, time (24hr), and name, position, and be signed. Details should also be given of anyone else who was present.
- 1.2 Always seek advice whenever safeguarding concerns arise with the diocese Safeguarding team.
- 1.3 In cases of emergency (and/or outside normal business hours), where a child, young person and/or vulnerable adult appears to be at immediate risk of harm, an urgent report must be made to the statutory agencies to ensure that no one is left in a dangerous situation pending intervention, in an emergency dial 999.
- 1.4 Where there is not an emergency the Diocese Safeguarding Advisor (DSA) must be notified within 24hrs. Where appropriate it will then be the role of the DSA to inform any statutory authorities (Police, Social Services) and conduct all further investigations / action
- 1.5 Any referral to the DSA should normally be made by the Parish Safeguarding officer, the Rector, or the Church Wardens.
- 1.6 If press is involved, they should be referred to the DSA who will in turn liaise with the Diocese Press Officer

2 Sharing of Information

- 2.1 An adult reporting a concern should be informed that their identity and information given may be shared with statutory agencies. Even where the adult has capacity to refuse information may still need to be shared if others are or will be a risk or if it is in the public interest following a criminal act.
- 2.2 Where a child is involved parents / guardians should be informed UNLESS they are under suspicion and such notification could compromise any subsequent investigations or place the child at risk.
- 2.3 If requested all documentation including rough notes may need to be passed to DSA.
- 2.4 The provision of information to the statutory agencies for the protection of a person, where the safety of others may be at risk will not be a breach of confidentiality or data protection legislation, even where sharing without consent. However much of the data, if not all, in relation to safeguarding and the Church will be classed as “sensitive personal data” under data protection legislation (Data Protection Act 1998 and from May 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation). This means that generally to be able to process this sensitive personal data, (and this will include the sharing of sensitive personal information), the data controller must process the data:-
 - Fairly;
 - Lawfully; and
 - With justification under one of the conditions of Schedule 2 and one of the conditions of Schedule 3.

The term processing is given a wide definition under data protection legislation and encompasses anything done with that data.

3 Offering support to victim/survivor and to respondent.

- 3.1 “The welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult must come first. A proper balance must be struck between protecting children, young people and/or vulnerable adults and respecting the rights of the respondent”

The Church of England. Practice Guidance: Responding to, assessing and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers. 2017

- 3.2 The Church should ensure support is available for victims / survivors of abuse. This may be pastoral or may require referral to specialist agencies.
- 3.3 A link person should be identified to support the respondent (person that the accusation has been made against). The link person must be independent of the investigation but has duty to pass on any information to investigation which must be made clear to respondent.

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