SAFEGUARDING POLICY

St Matthew's Church, Walsall, Policy on the Safeguarding of Adults/Children for a Parish Church as taken from National church policy

This statement was adopted by *St Matthew's Church, Walsall* at a Parochial Church Council meeting held on 20th November 2023, and further revised after the Parochial Church Council meeting held on 29th September 2025.

It is essential that everyone ensures they are also fully conversant with, and adheres to *St Matthew's Digital Communications Policy.*
In the near future it will be necessary to make appropriate amendments to the Digital Communications Policy and this Safeguarding Policy where young people reaching the age of 18 years, once members of youth groups, become Assistants and eventually Full Leaders of said groups).

1. This policy will be reviewed each year to monitor the progress which has been achieved. We recognize that everyone has different levels of vulnerability and that each of us may be regarded as vulnerable at some time in our lives.
   - We recognise that a position of power in relation to another creates a risk of vulnerability. As a consequence, we strive to ensure that we consider power when working and leading with people.
   - We recognise that children (0 to 18) by virtue of legal status and dependency on adults for their emotional and physical needs will always be vulnerable and at a disadvantage. We commit to considering this in our children's activities - undertaking supervision of staff working with them and risk assessing activities and groups as a check and balance in our work.
   - We understand that illness, disability, race, mental health and other issues can put adults in a position of vulnerability. We accept that these can be long term (ongoing), or temporary. We commit to considering this in our adults' activities and events - undertaking supervision of staff and risk assessing activities and groups as a check and balance in our work.
   - We commit to transparency in our actions and accountability for our work.

2. As members of this parish, we commit ourselves to respectful pastoral care for all adults and children to whom we minister.
   - We will consider issues relating to spiritual care in prayer activity ensuring that members of our prayer team consider power, control and spiritual abuse issues in their ministry.
   - We will ensure that leaders of our children's Sunday learning activities, weekly clubs and holiday clubs, as well as other ministries that involve working with vulnerable persons have appropriate enhanced DBS checks and training. We encourage and support home group leaders to undertake basic safeguarding training.
   - We will ensure that those who care for people in our parish attend appropriate safeguarding training and regular follow up refresher training.
   - We commit to discuss safeguarding and the support of safeguarding as a standing PCC agenda item.

3. **We commit ourselves to the safeguarding of people who may be vulnerable, ensuring** their well-being in the life of this church.
   - St Matthew's hosts a number of weekly activities for adults and children; we commit to ensuring that all adults have appropriate DBS checks, attend safeguarding training and supply evidence of this training for the DBS Register.

- We commit to ensuring that appropriate checks and balances are in place to provide appropriate support to everyone involved in the care, support and welfare of all children and vulnerable adults.

4. We commit ourselves to promoting safe practice by those in positions of trust.

- We commit to discuss safeguarding and support of safeguarding as a standing PCC agenda item.
- We will ensure that those in positions of trust (such as wardens), and those with remits or leadership of groups involving vulnerable children and adults have appropriate enhanced DBS checks and that these are updated every 3 years.
- We will engage with appropriate training and seek to develop relationships with other agencies and the diocese on safeguarding. All leaders with DBS checks shall complete an appropriate level of training and provide a copy of the relevant certificate for Church central record. Certificates and DBS records will be shared with Incumbent, Safeguarding Link Administrator who will record evidence on ChurchSuite Database. ChurchSuite Database automatically requests retraining and updates to DBS and is monitored by Link Administrator.
- Revision of the Safeguarding Policy will be an annual PCC agenda item and agree that whilst we have a named co-ordinator, we will accept collective ownership for this important issue.
- We will be transparent, open and not have secrets.

5. The parish commits itself to promoting the inclusion and empowerment of people who **may be vulnerable.**

- We will consider the impact of power, disadvantage, inclusion, disability, age and race on how we provide and plan for our ministry.
- We will actively (but appropriately), challenge each other in our work in order to ensure we consider a wide range of perspectives and views - ensuring that we do not oppressively impose our own values or views to another's detriment.
- Where a person struggles with an activity due to disadvantage, disability or illness we will go the extra mile to assist them so they can participate and contribute as a full part of the church.

6. It is the responsibility of each of us to prevent the physical, emotional, sexual, financial and spiritual abuse of vulnerable people and to report any such abuse that we discover or suspect.

- We will not collude, keep secrets, or make decisions when we have suspicion of abuse. We will seek through discussion the views of others and ensure through use of external agencies and the diocese safeguarding service that we engage and welcome external perspectives in order to promote a healthy accountable culture.
- We will report without bias to our personal view. We will report and not investigate.
- We will record concerns factually in diocese suggested formats (as per recording with care policy 2017).
- We will not take chances with the welfare of children or vulnerable adults.
- We are open and encourage scrutiny and encourage this in others.
- We have zero tolerance to abuse and put the welfare of vulnerable children and adults first.
- We take seriously training and activities relating to the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable adults, and seek to ingrain this in our congregational culture.

7. We undertake to exercise proper care in the appointment and selection of those who will work with people who may be vulnerable and committed to supporting, resourcing, training and regularly reviewing those who undertake work amongst people who may be vulnerable.

- We will ensure that those in positions of trust (such as wardens), and those with remits or leadership of groups involving vulnerable children etc have appropriate enhanced DBS checks and that these are updated every 3 years.
- We will engage with appropriate training and seek to develop relationships with other agencies and the Diocese on safeguarding
- We will use ChurchSuite as a resource to manage the effective recording of 'in date' DBS clearance and Diocese Safeguarding training
- The Church Office Administrator will maintain the ChurchSuite records and communicate when needed with the designated Safeguarding Officer and PCC appointed Link Officer
- Our incumbent undertakes to ensure that to the best of his/her knowledge all PCC members, wardens and ministry leaders are of good standing.
- The PCC undertakes to appoint and upskill a dedicated Safeguarding coordinator. At the appropriate time we will put in place an appropriate succession plan to identify future coordinators in time to enable training and transfer of knowledge.
- As a church we will ensure that we follow explicitly Safer Recruitment Guidelines when considering all prospective candidates, including those from ex-offenders, for paid and volunteer positions and ensure the relevant people are trained in Safer Requitement.
- Safeguarding co-ordination undertakes to maintain a relationship with the diocese level safeguarding team and ensure that this policy is followed.
- As an organisation which assesses applicants' suitability for positions which are included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order using criminal record checks processed through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), revised July 2024, St Matthew's Church complies fully with the code of practice and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs.

9. The parish adopts the guidelines of the Church of England and the Diocese.

- The Parish will report and record in line with Diocese policies and comply with local guidance for implementing national policies as defined in diocesan polices. These include the diocese safeguarding policy, recording with care policy, and safer recruitment policy. Copies of these policies can be accessed via the Lichfield Diocese Website. Hard copies are located in the Church Office. The Parish has their own Digital Communications Policy which includes social media.
- A hard copy and a digital copy of the Safeguarding Handbook, Safeguarding Policy, Recording with Care Policy, Parish Digital Communications Policy and Safer Recruitment Policy will be kept in the Church Office.
- A digital master copy for recording incidents will be kept on file in the Church Office.
- A password secure file will be kept on the cloud for recording any specific named incidents. The password will be restricted to the Safeguarding Officer and Link Administrator.

10. Each person who works with vulnerable people will agree to abide by these recommendations and the guidelines established by this church.

- Those working with vulnerable adults or children will sign a declaration to state that they have read and agree to abide by the points outlined in this policy.

This church appoints Mrs Barbara Parker to represent the concerns and views of vulnerable people at our meetings and to outside bodies as Parish Safeguarding Coordinator.

Guidelines

Some definitions
A child is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.
The term **safeguarding** covers vetting and safer recruitment, safer working practices, responding to concerns, working with partner agencies, dealing with allegations against those responsible for children and other matters that may be relevant. The term **child protection** is used for responding to concerns where it appears that a child may have been harmed.

Harm means ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development, including, for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of **significant harm** as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children, and gives local authorities a duty to make enquiries to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child who is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. Any concern about significant harm requires careful investigation and assessment.

Children can be harmed in many ways. Where their health, physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual or social development is damaged by other people, this is an abuse of relationships, a misuse of power and a betrayal of trust. Someone may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them, or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or by another child or children.

Child abuse has many forms. The report *Working together to safeguard children* (Department for Education, 2010) identified four distinct types of abuse, namely physical abuse; sexual abuse; neglect; and emotional abuse. This report, and the House of Bishops' report *Protecting all God's Children: the* po/icy *for safeguarding children in the Church of England* provide further detailed definitions of these four strands, and on specific manifestations of abuse including for example, internet related abuse, bullying (abuse by other children), sexual exploitation, forced marriage and so called honour-based violence, and allegations of possession by evil spirits.

Vulnerable adults
In order to bring into focus those people for whom the Church should have a particular care, *Promoting a safe church* provides this working definition:

Any adult aged 18 or over who, by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation is permanently *or for the time being* unable to take care of themself, or to protect themself against significant harm or exploitation may be considered vulnerable.

Promoting a safe church states that at some time everyone will be vulnerable to a wide range of pressures, concerns or dangers, and that no-one is 'invulnerable", some people may consider themselves to be strong but, when circumstances change, strengths can quickly disappear.

Some people, by reason of their physical or social circumstances, have higher levels of vulnerability than others. It is the Christian duty of everyone to recognize and support those who are identified as being more vulnerable. In supporting a vulnerable person we must do so with compassion and in a way that maintains dignity.

Vulnerability is not an absolute; an individual cannot be labelled as 'vulnerable' in the same way as

a child is regarded as such. Childhood is absolute: someone who is not yet eighteen years of age is, in the eyes of the law, a child; this is not the case with vulnerability. However, some of the factors that may increase vulnerability include:

- a sensory or physical disability or impairment;
- a learning disability;
- a physical illness;
- mental ill health (including dementia), chronic or acute;
- an addiction to alcohol or drugs;
- the failing faculties in old age;
- a permanent or temporary reduction in physical, mental or emotional capacity brought about by life events, for example bereavement or previous abuse or trauma.

Mistreatment, abuse and harm

Mistreatment is defined in the government report *No Secrets* (2000) as 'a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons'. In a church context *Promoting a safe church* indicates that this could be any misuse of a pastoral or managerial relationship, from the most serious to less severe behaviour, which lies at its root. The term covers abuse, bullying and harassment. These categories are not watertight and can merge into one another. Harm is what results from mistreatment or abuse.

Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) also known as female circumcision or cutting, is a collective term for procedures which include the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs, or injury to the female genital organs, for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. Female genital mutilation is physical abuse, and whilst it is perceived by parents not to be an act of hate, it is harmful, it is child abuse and it is unlawful. It has long lasting significant implications for those who have the procedure performed on them. Any concerns linked to this having taken place or being planned should be reported to the Child Protection & Safeguarding Coordinator or to the rector or another member of St Matthew's clergy.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is essentially about the misuse of power and the exercise of control by one person over another within the context of any intimate or close relationship. Such abuse may manifest itself in a variety of ways including physical violence, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual violence and abuse, financial control and abuse and the imposition of social isolation or movement deprivation.

Some forms of domestic violence are very subtle, leaving no physical marks or scars, but can be, nonetheless, equally as damaging. Domestic violence can occur in every type of home, regardless of the individuals' gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, socio-economic class, age or ethnicity. Any concerns over domestic violence linked to adults or children should be reported to the Child Protection & Safeguarding Coordinator or to the rector or another member of St Matthew's clergy.

Reporting concerns

If somebody believes that a child or young person may be suffering, or is at risk of suffering, significant harm, that person should always refer the concerns to the Child Protection & Safeguarding Coordinator', who should, after first informing the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer inform the local authority children's social care services. In addition to social care, the police and the NSPCC have powers to intervene in these circumstances. In a case where concerns relate to allegations of child abuse by a member of the clergy, the Child Protection & Safeguarding Coordinator must report the matter immediately (that is, before contacting the Diocesan

Safeguarding Officer) to the Area Bishop, or if unavailable, to the Diocesan Bishop or a bishop from one of the other Episcopal Areas within the diocese of Lichfield.

Advice set out in the report *Protecting all God's Children: the policy for safeguarding children in the Church of England* suggests that those making referrals should seek, in general, to discuss any concerns with the family and, where possible, seek their agreement to make referrals. However, the report stresses that this should only be done if and when such discussion and agreement-seeking does not increase the risk of significant harm, or compromise an investigation by the statutory authorities. It will often be better to wait for a strategy discussion, which will include on its agenda how and when parents should be informed. In urgent cases telephone the police.

What do I do if I suspect a child is being abused?
You should inform the Child Protection & Safeguarding Coordinator, or if the Child Protection & Safeguarding Coordinator is unavailable, the Children & Families Worker or a member of St Matthew's clergy (who should then inform the Child Protection & Safeguarding Coordinator). You should not investigate the matter yourself, question the child or challenge others about your concerns. Record any facts which support your suspicions and date and sign them.

What do I do if a child talks to me about abuse by someone else?
You should listen carefully to what the child tells you, accepting what is said. You should reassure the child that it's OK to tell you and also explain that you may not be able to keep secret what the child tells you. You should inform the Child Protection & Safeguarding Coordinator, or if the Child Protection & Safeguarding Coordinator is unavailable, the Children & Families Worker or a member of St Matthew's clergy (who should then inform the Child Protection & Safeguarding Coordinator). You should not investigate the matter yourself, question the child or challenge others about your concerns. Record exactly what you have been told, when you were told, and sign and date the record.

What do I do if I receive from a third party an allegation of child abuse by anyone (someone at St Matthew's, someone using the Centre, or anyone else — including an allegation about myself?
You should inform the Child Protection & Safeguarding Coordinator, or if the Child Protection & Safeguarding Coordinator is unavailable, the Children & Families Worker or a member of St Matthew's clergy (who should then inform the Child Protection & Safeguarding Coordinator). You should not investigate the matter yourself; you should not contact or challenge the person about whom the allegation has been made; you should not contact or question the child or children who it is alleged have been abused. Record exactly what you have been told, when you were told, and sign and date the record. clergy (who should then inform the Child Protection & Safeguarding Coordinator). You should not investigate the matter yourself, question the child or challenge others about your concerns. Record exactly what you have been told, when you were told, and sign and date the record.

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child or children who it is alleged have been abused. Record exactly what you have been told, when you were told, and sign and date the record.

‘ Please note the arrangements for out of hours safeguarding emergency calls for Lichfield Diocese. The Diocese has an arrangement with CCPAS (The Churches’ Child Protection Advisory Service) to provide professional telephone cover for any emergencies. (The out-of-hours and weekend emergency number for safeguarding issues at CCPAS have been renamed Thirty One: Eight — Sept 2019)

Part of our contract with them is Information Sharing Agreement. Callers to Thirtyone:eight please listen carefully to all the options as they have changed. When advised, you should select: option 1 - 'Yes' to membership and you can then select either of the following options: 'speak with the Helpline team ' OR 'you are part of an organisation that has an information sharing agreement with us' When you get through to the team please mention, that you are calling from 'Lichfield’ who are an 'Information sharing holder.'

We are hoping that this information with be helpful and will limit any confusion should you need to call.

If any one is in immediate harm or danger then please do call 999.

Versions

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