



# Parish Safeguarding Policy

**Issue 2**

In 2019 St Mary's replaced their previous Child Protection Policy and their Vulnerable Adults Policy with one Parish Safeguarding Policy

## DEFINITIONS

### **Child**

Someone aged 17 years and under

**Young Person/People** someone aged between 14 – 17 years

### **Vulnerable Adult**

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 him or herself or to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

### **Volunteer**

Someone who is involved in unpaid church work

### **Paid Worker**

Someone who is employed by the church or the Diocese

### **Church Officer**

A church officer is anyone appointed or selected to a role on behalf of the church whether they are lay or ordained paid or unpaid

### **Respondent**

The person about whom a safeguarding concern or allegation has been made. Sometimes called "the subject of a concern or allegation" or "alleged perpetrator"

### **Parish Safeguarding Coordinator (the 'Designated Person')**

A person appointed by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) with special responsibility for safeguarding children and adults, to work with the incumbent and the PCC to implement policy and procedures. N.B On some Church of England documents this role is referred to as Parish Safeguarding Officer

### **Parish Identity Verifier**

The person nominated by the PCC who is responsible for the administration of the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) applications

### **Parish Safeguarding Advocate (Children)**

The persons nominated by the PCC to whom children or young people know they can talk to about any problems, if they wish

### **Parish Safeguarding Advocate (Vulnerable adults)**

The person nominated by the PCC to whom vulnerable adults know they can talk to about any problems if they so wish

### **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**

A Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) works within each Local Authority area and is there to support staff across all organisations who work with children and young people if any concerns arise regarding any practitioner who works with children and young people



## PARISH SAFEGUARDING POLICY (Issue 2)

The Parochial Church Council of St Mary's Wythall agreed and adopted all of the House of Bishop's safeguarding policy and practice guidance and The Church of England-Birmingham's procedures for their implementation on .....

Signature ----- Chairperson of Parochial Church Council

### Key Principles

**Safeguarding is an integral part of our Christian life at St Mary's and the welfare of our children, young people and vulnerable adults is very important to us. The key principles underpinning our policy are:**

- The maintenance of a safe, open and respectful environment
- Safe recruitment, training and support for our church officers
- Clear lines of safeguarding accountability
- Clear safeguarding policy, procedures and guidelines
- Prompt and correct response to safeguarding allegations and concerns.
- Effective information sharing and confidential record keeping
- Sensitive pastoral care to victims, survivors and those accused of abuse
- Effective links to external agencies and the Bishop's Safeguarding Advisor
- Regular evaluation to ensure best practice

### Policy

1. We commit to appointing a Parish Safeguarding Coordinator to work with the incumbent and the PCC to implement policy and procedures
2. We have established clear lines of accountability within the church for safeguarding and we recognize the need to ensure awareness of this in the wider church
3. We recognize the need to create a safe environment in which children and young people and vulnerable adults feel safe and empowered to ask for help or support and in which our church officers also feel protected and supported.
4. We commit to ensuring the selection and recruitment of all our church officers is in accordance with the House of Bishop's Safer Recruitment Practice guidance and dependent on their role this may require conducting a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check on applicants:
  - a. Prior to their appointment
  - b. Every five years subsequently unless there are reasons to renew earlier e.g. where there are concerns about an individual or where an individual undergoes a role change or takes up a new post

5. We will ensure that all our church officers understand and have access to the St Mary's Parish Safeguarding Policy, the Church of England Code of Safer Working Practice and the Church of England safeguarding Policy: Promoting a Safer Church.
6. We will ensure that all our church officers understand and have their own copy of their role description
7. We accept responsibility for ensuring all our church officers undertake the Diocesan Safeguarding Training commensurate with their role, close to starting and every 3 years thereafter.
8. We recognize our responsibility to report abuse in whatever context inside or outside the church environment and to ensure safeguarding concerns and allegations of any kind are reported to the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser within 24 hours of the concern arising
9. We recognize the need to create an open and respectful culture that allows safeguarding allegations or suspicions of abuse to be raised and to have clear procedures in place to deal promptly with these concerns. These procedures are in accordance with the relevant Church of England Policy and Practice Guidelines and will be implemented in consultation with the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser.
10. We commit to paying particular attention to children, young people and adults with special needs to ensure their privacy, integration and protection within the church family.
11. We will ensure that known offenders or others who may pose a risk to children or vulnerable adults are sensitively managed and monitored in consultation with the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser.
12. We commit to informing the whole church fellowship about the Parish Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and to clearly display information relating to safeguarding personnel and policy in an accessible place and on the front page of church website
13. We will seek to comply with all data protection legislation and diocesan guidelines in respect of the recording and storage of safeguarding records
14. We commit to the support of adult survivors and abused children or young people regardless of the type of abuse and when or where it occurred
15. In consultation with the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser we commit to providing appropriate pastoral support and guidance to any individual within our church community who is accused of causing harm to any child, young person or adult in our care.
16. We undertake to regularly evaluate all aspects of our ministry to children, young people and vulnerable adults with special reference to meeting the requirements of the Church of England Birmingham Safeguarding Dashboard and our own safeguarding policy and procedures
17. We agree to review annually our Parish Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and to consult where appropriate with those directly involved in their application

## PROCEDURES

### **1. Parish Safeguarding Coordinator (PSC) and a Lead Parish Identity Verifier**

The church is committed to the appointment of a Parish Safeguarding Coordinator and a Lead Parish Identity Verifier to implement, on behalf of the PCC, the Parish Safeguarding Policies and Procedures for St Mary's Church Wythall. The church is also committed to the appointment of a Children and Young Person's Advocate and a Vulnerable Adults Advocate (Please see note 4 below).

### **2. Lines of Accountability**

The church is committed to ensuring the names and contact details of St Mary's safeguarding personnel are visibly displayed in the church foyer and on the church website.

### **3. Creating a safe environment**

We will strive to create and maintain an environment that is safe for all, that promotes well-being and fosters respect, inclusion and empowerment across all age groups. Group leaders will ensure, that as far as possible, the rooms to be used by children, young people and vulnerable adults are suitable and as safe as we can make them

#### **3.1. The Church building and Coppice School Premises**

A regular check of the rooms used, main hall, toilets, crèche room, entrances and exits will be undertaken by relevant people. Any problems will be reported back to the PSC. We will ensure, as far as is possible, that the rooms, entrances and exits used by children, young people and vulnerable adults are as accessible and as safe as we can make them.

#### **3.2. Access to the Premises**

Safety regarding access to the premises is the responsibility of key holders using the facilities, to ensure that relevant doors are kept locked to protect the safety of the School during school hours, whilst still ensuring safe entrance and exit for users of the premises.

#### **3.3. Use of diocesan and church owned homes (Vicarage and the homes of the Curate and the Children, Young People and Families Minister)**

The diocese and the church ensure that all premises are suitable for work with children, young people and vulnerable adults. In respect of the children and young people at least one of the leaders involved in the children and young people's activity taking place in these residences must be a non- resident.

#### **3.4. Private homes**

We will ensure that the premises used are suitable for work with children, young people and vulnerable adults. In respect of the children and young people at least one of the leaders involved in the children and young people's activity taking place in these residences must be a non- resident.

#### **3.5. Residential and non- residential trips**

We will ensure that the environment into which we take children, young people and vulnerable adults meets our standards of a safe environment. We will familiarise

ourselves with the safety regulations of the premises and conduct a risk assessment. We will advise children, young people and vulnerable adults under our care of any special safety precautions to be observed whilst on the premises. In respect of children and young people parents will be required to complete a parental consent form for all residential and non-residential trips.

### **3. 6 Transporting children, young people and vulnerable adults**

When transporting children, young people and vulnerable adults in our care we will adhere to the Church of England safe practice guidelines at all times (Please see Safeguarding: Guidelines for Safe Practice: Transporting Children and Young People for detail)

The church has a Health and Safety Policy and an insurance policy with Ecclesiastical Insurance covering public liability

### **3.7. Staffing Ratios**

In respect of our children and young people the gender and ratio of adults to children will be in accordance with the Church of England guidance which is specified below:

Guidelines for Staffing Ratios

For safety reasons, it is recommended that at least the following number of PCC-appointed leaders are present at each session. This is only a minimum and should be adjusted according to the activity or the building and the ability of the children.

Age Group	Adult to Children
0 – 2 years	1 for every 3
2 – 3 years	1 for every 4
4 – 8 years	1 for every 6
9 – 12 years	1 for every 8
13 – 18 years	1 for every 10

(Anyone under 18 years old cannot be included in staff ratios and should not be solely in charge of a group)

When working with children and young people the general guidance about the ratio of adults is affected by a number of variants. Ideally, there should be a minimum of two adults to each group. Other variants that affect ratios are:

- The age of the children or young people
- The venue in which they meet, the style of the building, its location
- The level of their abilities
- Any special needs
- The activity to be undertaken
- The need for special instruction

Judgements should be made on the basis of any varying circumstances, e.g. if children meet in a site with separate rooms, then open the doors and have a 'floating adult'. It is also advisable to have staff or volunteers of both genders if working with a mixed gender group and if any of the group members come from a minority community, it is ideal if the adult team includes an adult from the same ethnic group.

## **4. The safe selection and recruitment of paid workers and volunteers**

**4.1** All paid and unpaid roles that involve work with children, young people and vulnerable adults will be advertised. Paid roles will be advertised widely using external media and volunteer roles by informal discussion and church notices

**4.2.** The incumbent, the parish safeguarding Coordinator and/ or a church warden will interview each person who applies to work as a paid worker with our children, young people or vulnerable adults. A relevant church leader will conduct an informal discussion with volunteers who offer to work with our children, young people or vulnerable adults outlining the scope and demands of the role. During an interregnum interviews for paid workers will be carried out in consultation with the Area Dean and the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that this is carried out.

**4.3.** The applicants both paid and unpaid will be required to complete and sign the relevant application form which also incorporates a confidential declaration form laid down by the Church of England House of Bishops (2017). Applicants will be required to provide two references and to complete, where appropriate to the role, an online ID DBS checking process in liaison with the Parish Identity Verifier.

**4.4.** A Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check will be carried out on both paid and unpaid applicants (dependent upon role) Applicants will be offered an information pack regarding completion of the relevant forms and the documents required for the clearance process.

**4.5.** The Bishop and the Bishop's Safeguarding Advisor will be informed in the event that a completed declaration form reveals any possible cause for concern

**4.6.** All declaration information will be kept securely on computer or in filing cabinets. The information will be held in perpetuity and will be kept strictly confidential.

**4.7.** All paid workers will have a clear job description and person specification or for the volunteer, a role outline. These will include the level of DBS check that is required.

**4.8.** All paid workers are subject to an interview and to a three -month probationary period. The line manager will carry out the review at the end of this period and offer support throughout this probationary period. Volunteers will be given a settling in period during which support will be given and a review conducted at a specified time.

**4.9.** All applicants under the age of 18 years are required to have their application form signed by their parent /guardian and we will ensure that no worker under 18 years has sole responsibility for any group of children or young people.

**4.10.** All paid workers and volunteers, whose role requires a DBS check, should have their DBS check renewed every 5 years. A register of DBS checks, DBS individual reference numbers and renewal dates will be kept by the Parish Identity Verifier.

## **5 Ensuring understanding of the parish safeguarding policies and procedures**

The church will provide initial and ongoing training for all paid workers and volunteers. We will also ensure that all paid workers and volunteers are supplied with a copy of St Mary's Parish Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and given the opportunity to discuss any areas of concern in order that they fully understand the issues involved.

## **6. Initial and ongoing training**

The church is committed to training and equipping its church officers to have the confidence and skills they need to care and support children, young people and vulnerable adults and to recognise and respond to abuse. To that end we will ensure that all new and existing paid workers and volunteers attend training in accordance with the core safeguarding training

programme specified by the Church of England Birmingham, near to the time of their appointment and every three years thereafter.

### **7. Children with special needs and ethnic minority groups**

The church will assist in teaching those children, young people or adults with disabilities personal safety skills and will ensure every effort is made to ensure their personal safety whilst in our care. The church will endeavour, through the language used and the actions taken, to ensure those children, young people or vulnerable adults with special needs are not marginalized but are fully integrated into the church and are helped to increase in confidence and self-esteem.

### **8. Responding promptly to safeguarding concerns or allegations**

Please see Page 9 Procedure A Responding to a Safeguarding Concern or Allegation

### **9. Responding to a safeguarding concern or allegation of domestic abuse**

Please see Page 13 Procedure B Responding to a Safeguarding Concern or Allegation of Domestic Abuse

### **10. Responding to those that may present a known risk to children, young people or vulnerable adults within a Christian congregation**

Please see Page 16 Procedure C St Mary's Policy Statement on Responding to those that may present a known risk to children, young people or vulnerable adults within a Christian congregation

### **11. Reporting serious incidents to the Charity Commission**

Please see Appendix 1 of this document: Delegation by PCC Members Reporting a Serious Incident to the Charity Commission

### **12. Informing the church fellowship regarding our safeguarding policies and procedures**

The church will make available a full copy of St Mary's Parish Safeguarding Policy to church members. To this end a copy of the Parish Safeguarding Policy will be placed in a folder and stored in the folder rack in the foyer. The policy will also be made available on the church website. An electronic copy of the policy is also available by request from the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator, the incumbent and the church administrator.

### **13. Annual review of policies and procedures**

In February of each year the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator will carry out a review of the Parish Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. In the course of the review the Parish Safeguarding Officer will meet with the appropriate leaders in the church and will also liaise with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team as appropriate to keep abreast of any centralized policy changes or any revisions to the law.

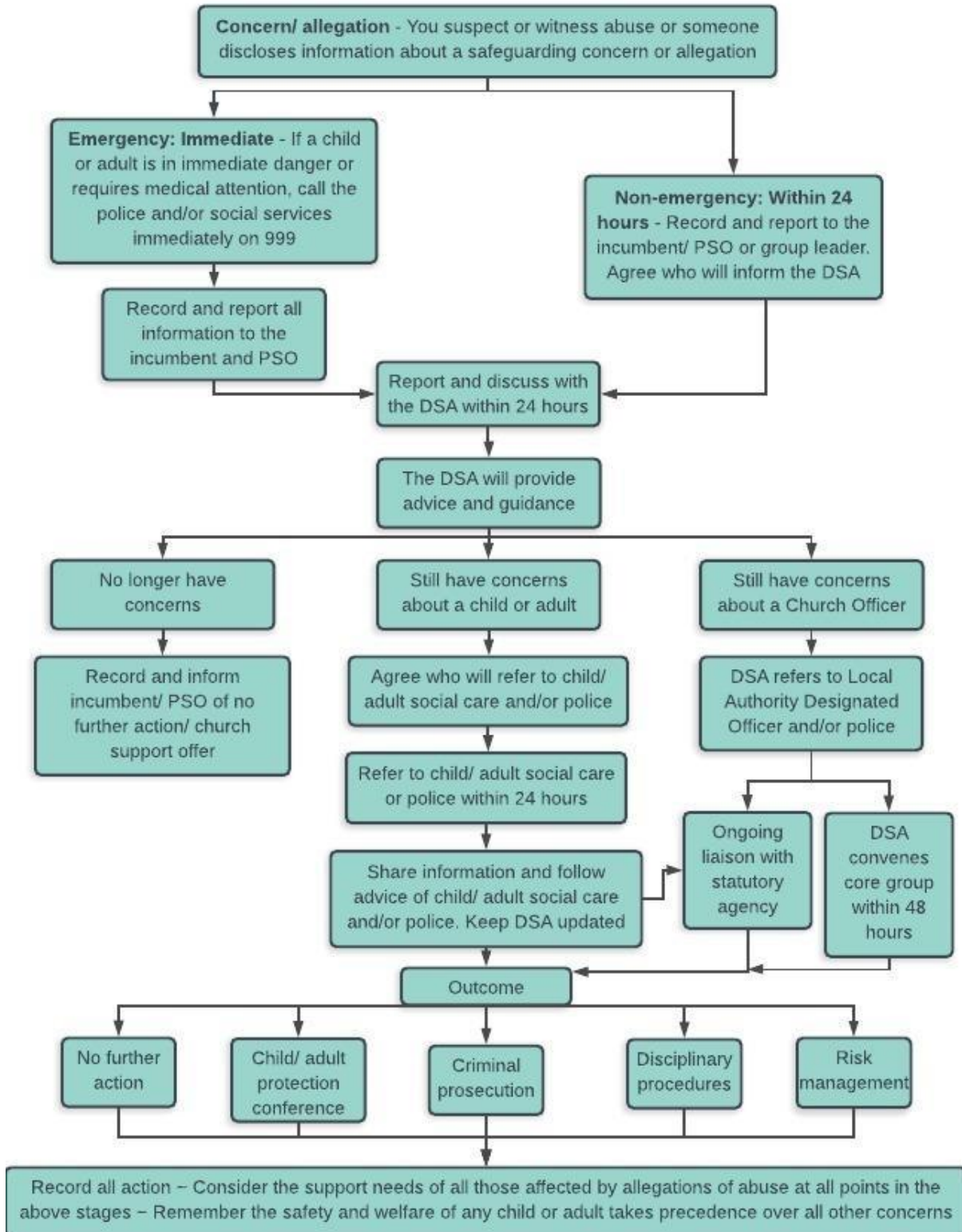
### **14. Organisations using church premises**

Due to our building being owned by the Coppice School any external organisations hire the premises directly from the school. The school is therefore responsible for the necessary checks



**RESPONDING PROMPTLY TO A SAFEGUARDING CONCERN OR ALLEGATION**

**Quick Guide**



## **PROCEDURE TO FOLLOW IN THE EVENT OF A CONCERN BEING RAISED ABOUT A CHILD OR ADULT OR YOU ARE CONCERNED THAT A CHURCH OFFICER MAY BE ABUSING A CHILD OR ADULT**

### **1. RESPOND well to the victim or survivor**

- 1.1 In the event of a direct disclosure ensure that the victim or survivor feels listened to and taken seriously
- 1.2 Explain what will happen next and check out support requirements
- 1.3 Explain that their identity and that of the respondent will be shared with key church officers and may be shared with other statutory agencies if there is a current risk to children or adults. The concern or allegation should not be shared with anyone other than those who need to know e.g. appropriate church officers and statutory agencies

### **2. In an EMERGENCY Situation**

- 2.1 In the event of concern that the child or adult is at risk of immediate danger or significant harm contact the emergency services on 999

### **3. In a NON-EMERGENCY situation**

- 3.1 Contact the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator or incumbent in the first instance (if they are not available contact the Bishop's Safeguarding Advisor directly)
- 3.2 The Parish Safeguarding Coordinator or the Incumbent will notify the Bishop's Safeguarding Advisor. This must be done **within 24hrs** of a concern being raised, The Bishop's Safeguarding Advisor will provide advice and guidance
- 3.3 In the event of the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator and the incumbent and the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser are not available within 24hrs the following action should be taken:
  - Contact Child Social Care if a child is being abused or Adult Social Care if an adult is being abused. Inform the Parish Safeguarding Officer or the incumbent as soon as possible that you have made a referral and they with contact the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser
  - Contact the Local Authority Designated officer (LADO) and or the police if the concern relates to a church officer who may be abusing a child or adult. Inform the Parish safeguarding Coordinator or the incumbent as soon as possible that you have made a referral and they with contact the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser.

**N.B. If in doubt do not delay seek advice from the statutory agencies**

4. **Do not contact** the respondent or anyone who may be implicated in the allegation or disclosure, even if they would normally be contacted as part of the procedure until advice has been sought from the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser or statutory agencies /police

### **5. RECORD the details of the concern or allegation**

When it is not appropriate to make notes at the time, make a written record as soon as possible afterwards or before the end of the day. Record the time, date location, persons present and how the concern or allegation was made e.g. by face to face conversation, telephone, letter etc. The report should also include details of the information provided to the person making the concern or allegation as well as the information received. Sign and date the record. Keep the record factual and pass a copy on to the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser, the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator

and /or the incumbent. The records should be kept secure and confidential at all times

N.B A Model Parish Recording template can be downloaded from the following site <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/4.%20Model%20Parish%20Recording%20Template.docx>

## **6 REFER**

### **6.1 In the event of the concern being about a child or adult**

The Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser will act in line with the House of Bishops guidance. They will offer support and guidance and make the required referrals. In the event of there being a risk of harm the concerns must be reported to the statutory agencies within 24hrs of the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser receiving the concerns. This would be the Child or Adult Social Care and/or the police. Close communication between the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser and the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator /incumbent should be maintained until the situation is resolved. The archdeacon should also be informed.

### **6.2 In the event of the concern being about a church officer**

The Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser will act in line with the House of Bishops guidance. They will offer advice support and guidance and refer the concerns to the Local Authority Designated Officer and/or the police within 24hrs. The Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser will then take over the management of the safeguarding concern in conjunction with a core group (which will be convened within 48hrs) and the statutory agencies. There may be a requirement for parish representatives to attend subsequent core group meetings.

This procedure is the same in the case of non- recent abuse

**N.B. A proper balance must be achieved between protecting children and adults and respecting the rights of the person against whom the allegation is made. In such circumstances the well - being of the child, young person or adult must come first. The rights of the person against whom the allegation is made are important and must be given due weight, once the immediate safety and protection of the child, young person or adult has been assured.**

## RESPONDING TO A SAFEGUARDING CONCERN OR ALLEGATION

### SAFE PRACTICE GUIDELINES

#### 1. RESPOND

##### Do

- Listen.
- Take what is said seriously.
- Only use open questions (open questions begin with words like: who, what, when, where and how. Open questions cannot be answered with a 'yes' or 'no').
- Remain calm.
- Take into account the person's age and level of understanding.
- Check, if face to face, whether they mind you taking notes while they talk so you can make sure you capture the information accurately. At the end you can check with them that you have understood everything correctly.
- Offer reassurance that disclosing is the right thing to do.
- Establish only as much information as is needed to be able to tell your activity leader/ Parish Safeguarding Coordinator / Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser and statutory authorities what is believed to have happened, when and where.
- Check out what the person hopes to result from the disclosure.
- Tell the child or adult what you are going to do next.

##### Do Not

- Make promises that cannot be kept (e.g. that you won't share the information).
- Make assumptions or offer alternative explanations.
- Investigate.
- Contact the person about whom allegations have been made.
- Do a physical or medical examination.

#### 2. RECORD

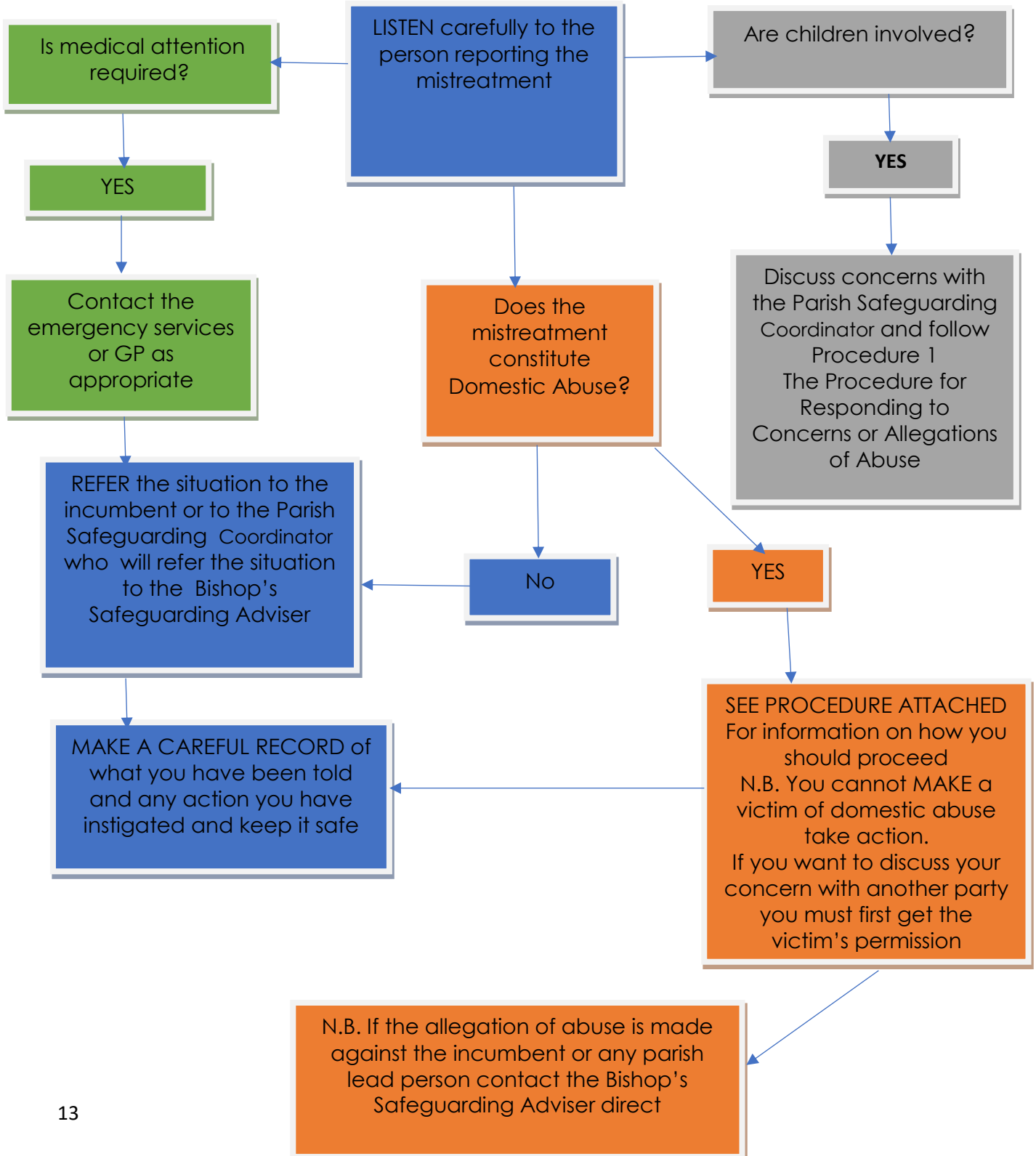
- Make some very brief notes at the time, if appropriate, and write them up in detail as soon as possible.
- Do not destroy your original notes in case they are required by the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser or the statutory authorities.
- Record the date, time, place, words used and how they appeared to you. Record the actual words used, including any swear words or slang.
- Record facts and observable things, not your interpretations or assumptions.
- Don't speculate or jump to conclusions.

#### 3. REPORT

- If there is immediate danger to a child or adult contact the police.
- Otherwise report to your activity leader/ Parish Safeguarding Coordinator /incumbent immediately.
- Within 24 hours the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator /incumbent reports the concerns to the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser.
- The Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser will advise regarding reporting to statutory agencies within 24 hours.
- If there is any doubt seek advice from social services or the police.
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**PROCEDURE B RESPONDING TO A SAFEGUARDING CONCERN OR ALLEGATION OF DOMESTIC ABUSE**

**A Quick Guide**



## PROCEDURE FOR RESPONDING TO A SAFEGUARDING CONCERN OR ALLEGATION OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

### 1. Statement

All forms of abuse are irreconcilable with the Christian faith and St Mary's pledges to do everything it can to raise awareness of domestic abuse across the church and the community it serves. The church will strive to be vigilant in recognising potential signs and at all times it will undertake to respond promptly and in accordance to the Church of England guidelines to all concerns or allegations of domestic abuse. The church recognises that faith and scripture cannot ever be used to justify domestic violence

### 2. Definition of Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is 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

### 3. RECOGNISE

- 3.1 Be vigilant to the indicative behaviours of domestic abuse. The victim could exhibit one or more of the following:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• He /she has unexplained bruises or injuries</li><li>• He /she shows signs of depression or feeling suicidal</li><li>• He /she is unusually quiet or withdrawn</li><li>• He /she is having panic attacks</li><li>• He /she has frequent absences from work or other commitments</li><li>• He /she wears concealing clothing even on warm days</li><li>• He /she stops talking about their partner</li><li>• He /she is anxious about being out or rushes away suddenly</li></ul>
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- 3.2 Be vigilant to the signs of domestic abuse. The following may be witnessed or reported by the victim

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Patterns of coercive control</li><li>• Destructive criticism or verbal abuse</li><li>• Consistent disrespect</li><li>• Breaking trust</li><li>• Isolation</li><li>• Harassment</li><li>• Threats and intimidation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sexual violence</li><li>• Physical violence</li><li>• Denial</li><li>• Economic exploitation</li><li>• Using children against the victim</li><li>• Destroying the victim's self-esteem</li><li>• Blaming /causing guilt and shame in the victim</li></ul>
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### 4. RESPOND

- 4.1 Assess whether medical attention is needed and if yes contact the emergency services and tell the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser ASAP. Inform the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator / Incumbent of your referral
- 4.2 Ascertain whether there are any children involved and if yes tell the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser ASAP and refer the children to the Children's Social Care Services (Encourage the victim to do this themselves where possible)
- 4.3 Prioritise the person's safety and that of any children above all other actions

- 4.4 Let the person know you are there for them if they need to talk. Take time to listen and take what they say seriously. Maintain confidentiality at all times.
- 4.5 With the victim's permission, tell your Parish Safeguarding Coordinator who will seek the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser's advice on realistic options e.g. police, Women's Aid, refuge, safe house etc.
- 4.6 If safe to do so, give helpline numbers, websites, leaflets etc and encourage the victim to seek professional help.
- 4.8 You cannot make a victim of domestic abuse take action it has to be their decision and if you want to discuss your concern with another party you must obtain the victim's permission

## **5. REFER**

- 5.1 The Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser must be informed if:
  - Both the victim and the alleged perpetrator are members of our church
  - The alleged perpetrator is a church officer
  - Before discussing any safety or exit plan with the victim
  - There is potential for damage to the church

## **6. RECORD**

- 6.1 Make a record of what you have been told or seen and your actions and/or advice
- 6.2 When consent to share has NOT been given ALWAYS record what you have been told and speak to your Parish Safeguarding Coordinator or Incumbent or the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser for support and advice on what to do next. DO NOT speak to anyone else
- 6.3 Store all records safely and confidentially

### **Notes**

Please also see: A Guide to Domestic Abuse for Leaders and Helpers: Church of England Birmingham (2019) available on the child and adult pages of the following website:  
[www.cofebirmingham.com/hub/safeguarding/](http://www.cofebirmingham.com/hub/safeguarding/)



## RESPONDING TO THOSE THAT MAY PRESENT A KNOWN RISK TO CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS WITHIN A CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION

### 1. STATEMENT

The House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy 2017 states '*The Church, based on the message of the gospel, opens its doors to all. It will therefore endeavour to offer pastoral care and support to any member of the church community who may present a known risk*'.

St Mary's recognises with regret, that there are individuals who abuse children or vulnerable adults and that they may be part of our church community. However, the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults must always be paramount. This is not to exclude people from the love of God, through the church, but to recognize that these people will need support and boundaries. Some examples of the risk that individuals may pose to children, young people and adults are:

**Sexual offences – against both adults and children:** This includes accessing indecent images of children on the internet.

**Financial abuse:** targeting of vulnerable adults for financial gain, for example, asking for money, the acceptance of large 'gifts' or offering to do a job for someone at an extortionate rate of pay.

### 2. RECOGNITION AND NOTIFICATION

The church may be notified of the perpetrator from the following sources:

- 2.1 The police, probation service, social services or a rehabilitation clinic.
- 2.2 The prison service or courts
- 2.3 The Archdeacon or Bishop
- 2.4 The incumbent of a previous church
- 2.5 A member of the congregation
- 2.6 A member of the public
- 2.7 The perpetrator themselves

### 3. RESPONSE

Always contact the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours, if you learn that any of the following people worship in your church:

- 3.1 Anyone placed on the sex offenders register, with a violent offence or conviction and/or who is barred from working with children or adults by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
- 3.2 Anyone who admits to being an abuser including non-recent abuse.
- 3.3 Anyone who is subject to an investigation for suspected abuse, including possession of indecent images of children, and/or is suspended from their usual role.



3.4 Anyone who may pose a risk to other church members due to their behaviour, irrespective of their criminal status.

Category (3.4) above may include a person in relation to whom:

3.5 An allegation of abuse against a child or adult has been investigated, but the matter has not proceeded to court, or the person has been acquitted, or the matter is currently the subject of proceedings in the criminal or civil courts but the person may still pose a risk.

3.6 A complaint or grievance has been received alleging inappropriate behaviour, which is not criminal.

3.7 There have been concerns about the person's alleged abusive behaviour to a previous or current partner.

In the event of the Bishops Safeguarding Advisor being made aware by any other source of any person in the above categories who is intending to or is worshipping at a local parish church, s/he will notify the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator / incumbent in the first instance.

#### **4. RECORD**

The Bishops Safeguarding Advisor will determine the appropriate action to be taken to best safeguard the parish and its congregation, based on the particular facts and circumstances of each case. They will undertake a risk assessment and the formation of a risk management plan known as a [Safeguarding Agreement](#). This will involve the respondent and usually the incumbent, church warden, Parish Safeguarding Coordinator and, if involved, statutory agencies e.g. police, National Probation Service and Children's Social Care. The persons involved will depend on the case.

In the event of the person being assessed as posing a risk to children or adults, the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser, together with any statutory agencies involved, will support the parish to:

- Form a small group of people to offer pastoral support, friendship and to monitor the respondent.
- Maintain the highest levels of confidentiality unless there is a breach of the agreement and it is necessary to inform others to protect a child or vulnerable adult.
- Agree with the respondent that he/she worship elsewhere if his/her victim or their family worship in the same church.
- Ensure the respondent is never offered any official role in the church or position of responsibility where he/she may be trusted by others, for example that of church warden, worship leader or any in which a child or vulnerable adult may, as a result, place trust in that person.
- Consider whether, with the person's agreement and that of any statutory authorities involved, the congregation should be informed.
- Meet with the respondent to draft a Safeguarding Agreement, setting out the parameters of his/her behaviour in the church setting.

The Safeguarding Agreement may include the following elements:

- Attend designated services or meetings only.
- Sit apart from children.
- Stay away from areas of the building where children or vulnerable adults meet.
- Attend a house group where there are no children or vulnerable adults.
- Decline hospitality where there are children or vulnerable adults.
- Never be alone with children or vulnerable adults.
- Never work or be part of a mixed group with children or vulnerable adults.
- Take no role or office in the church which gives him or her status or authority as others may deem that person to be trustworthy.

The church wardens should be involved in the drawing up of the written agreement with the respondent. Church wardens can direct parishioners where to sit and have a duty to maintain good order at divine service. When considered necessary church wardens can eject a person creating a disturbance. Should a "disturbance" be anticipated the police must be notified.

The Safeguarding Agreement will be monitored and reviewed at least annually.

In the event of the respondent refusing to sign the agreement the Bishop's Safeguarding Advisor will advise the parish and liaise with the police and other relevant agencies, as required, to seek a resolution. Any breach should be shared with the Bishop Safeguarding Advisor immediately, who will liaise with the statutory agencies, as required. It should be remembered that it is not possible to prevent a parishioner from attending a church service, unless this is a condition included in a court order or in his/her licence conditions upon release from prison (although, of course, he/she could voluntarily agree not to attend certain services). If a respondent parishioner wishes to attend any service, as part of the safeguarding arrangement (and this could be contained in his/her ongoing Safeguarding Agreement), it is possible for the church wardens to direct a person where to sit, put measures in place to closely supervise them (e.g. accompany the individual) and remove that person if they cause a disturbance. It is also possible to refuse access to other church activities (e.g. social activities such as tea/coffee after the service or worship group activities).

## Notes

1. This document reflects the principles, policies, procedures and practices that are appropriate to St Mary's Church Wythall
2. The St Mary's Parish Safeguarding Policy Procedures and Guidelines for Good Practice follow the recommendations of the following documents,
  - Church of England: House of Bishops (2018) *Parish Safeguarding Handbook: Promoting a Safer Church*
  - Church of England (2019) *Promoting a Safer Church: The Church of England's Safeguarding Policy for Children, Young People and Adults.*
  - Church of England (2019) National Safeguarding Team: *Safer Environment and Activities.*
  - Church of England (2019) *Code of Safer Working Practice*

3. All matters concerning the policy should be raised with the Vicar or the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator.
  
4. Current Safeguarding Personnel  
These are as follows:  
Incumbent St Mary's Church Rev Amanda Featherstone  
The Parish Safeguarding Coordinator for St Mary's Church is Miss Jenny Clark  
The Parish Identity Verifier for St Mary's Church is Mrs Cathy Walters  
The Children and Young People's Advocate for St Mary's Church is Mrs Ria Taylor  
The Vulnerable Adults Advocate for St Mary's Church is Mrs Linda Yates