



Parish Safeguarding Policy

Issue 7

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 Dashboard

The Parish Safeguarding Dashboard is an online tool, that helps churches keep track of safeguarding within their church and it also keeps them up to date with local and national changes in safeguarding requirements.



PARISH SAFEGUARDING POLICY (Issue 7)

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 **26th June 2025**

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 Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA)
- 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 recognise the need to ensure awareness of this in the wider church
3. We recognise 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 three 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. Parish Safeguarding Handbook Section 11
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 complete the required Church of England Safeguarding Learning Pathways, commensurate to their role, close to starting and to undertake refresher learning within a three-year cycle
8. We recognise 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 Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser within 24 hours of the concern arising
9. We recognise 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 Diocesan 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 Diocesan 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 Diocesan 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 Diocesan 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, Family and Schools Worker. 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. Taking Children /Young People Offsite

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. When taking children or

young people offsite the church leadership will be informed and will agree to the activity. Details of the activity and any itinerary will be given in advance to parents and consent forms will be received in advance of the activity taking place. Details of the activity and a list of contacts will be left with the incumbent and the Parish Safeguarding Co Ordinator. A risk assessment will be undertaken, and confirmation obtained that the activity is covered by PCC insurance. A leader will be designated to take responsibility for First Aid.

3. 6 Communicating with Children and Young People.

When communicating with children and young people in our care we will adhere to the Church of England procedural guidelines of safe practice at all times. Special vigilance is applied when using social media. (Please see page 19 Procedure D Using Social Media with Children and Young People)

3. 7 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 procedural guidelines for safe practice at all times (Please see page 20 Procedure E: Transporting Children and Young People)

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

3.8. 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. There should always 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, if possible, to have staff or volunteers of both genders if working with a mixed gender group.

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

4.1 All paid roles that involve work with children, young people and vulnerable adults will be advertised. They will be advertised widely using external media.

Recruitment to unpaid roles which involve work with children, young people and vulnerable adults will be carried out through informal discussion between church leadership and the potential volunteers. Safer recruitment guidelines will be followed.

4.2. The incumbent, along with an appropriate panel, will interview each person who is short listed to work as a paid worker with our children, young people or vulnerable adults. Safer recruitment guidelines will be followed. 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 Diocesan 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 description. 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 3 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 complete, near to the time of their appointment, the required Church of England Safeguarding Learning Pathways commensurate to their role, and complete refresher learning within a three-year cycle.

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 marginalised 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 is made available on the church website. An A4 hard copy of our Safeguarding Policy is kept in a file in our church foyer, with our other policies'. A hard copy and/or an electronic copy of the policy are also available by request from the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator or the Church Administrator.

13. Annual review of policies and procedures

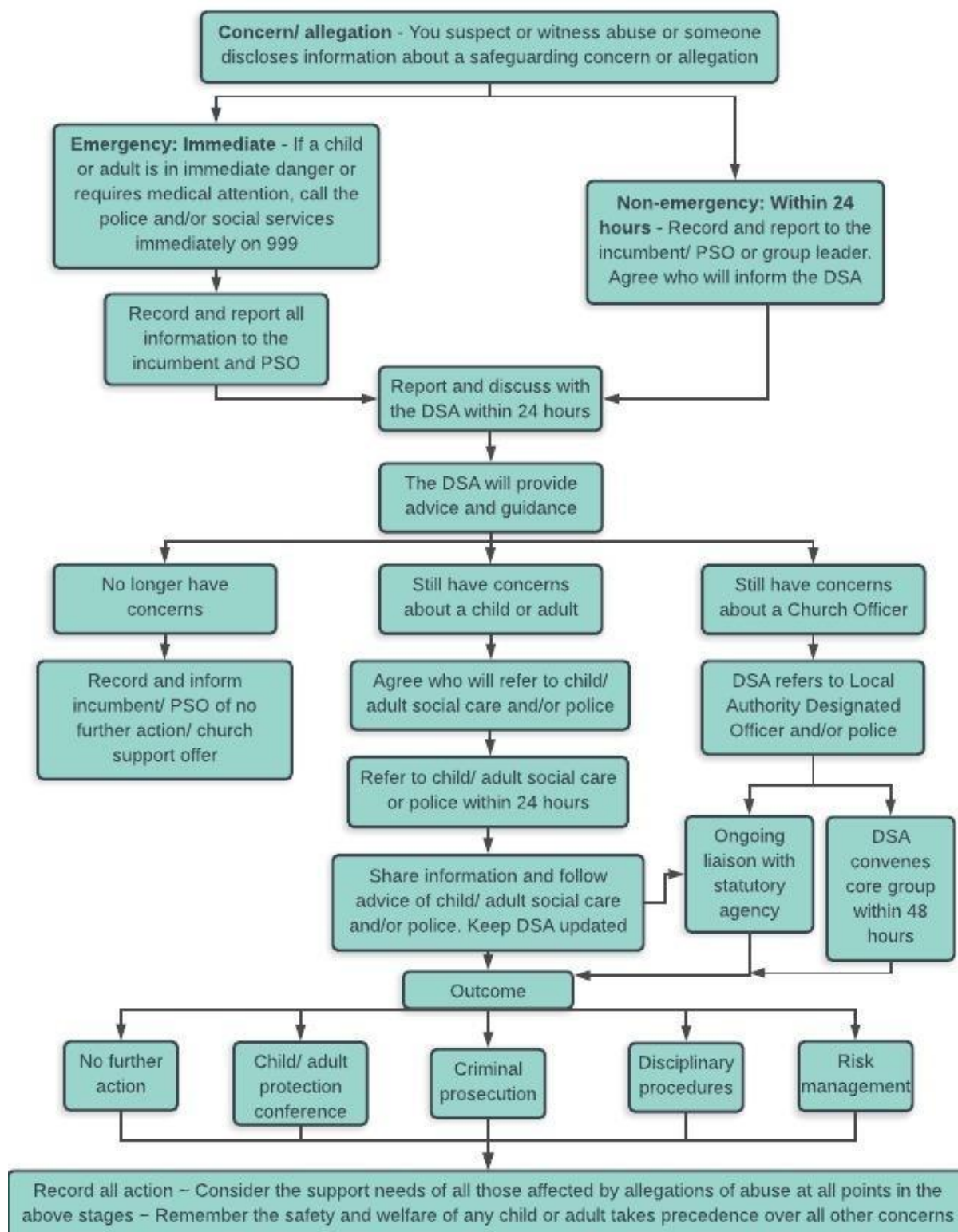
In February of each year the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator will carry out a review of the Parish Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. In the course of the review the Parish Safeguarding Officer will meet with the appropriate leaders in the church and will also liaise with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team 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 Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser directly)
- 3.2 The Parish Safeguarding Coordinator or the Incumbent will notify the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser. This must be done **within 24hrs** of a concern being raised, The Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser will provide advice and guidance
- 3.3 In the event of the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator and the incumbent and the Diocesan 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 will contact the Diocesan 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 will contact the Diocesan 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 Diocesan 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 Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator and /or the incumbent. The records should be kept secure and confidential at all time

6 REFER

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

The Diocesan 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 Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser receiving the concerns. This would be the Child or Adult Social Care and/or the police. Close communication between the Diocesan 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 Diocesan 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 Diocesan 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 / Diocesan 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

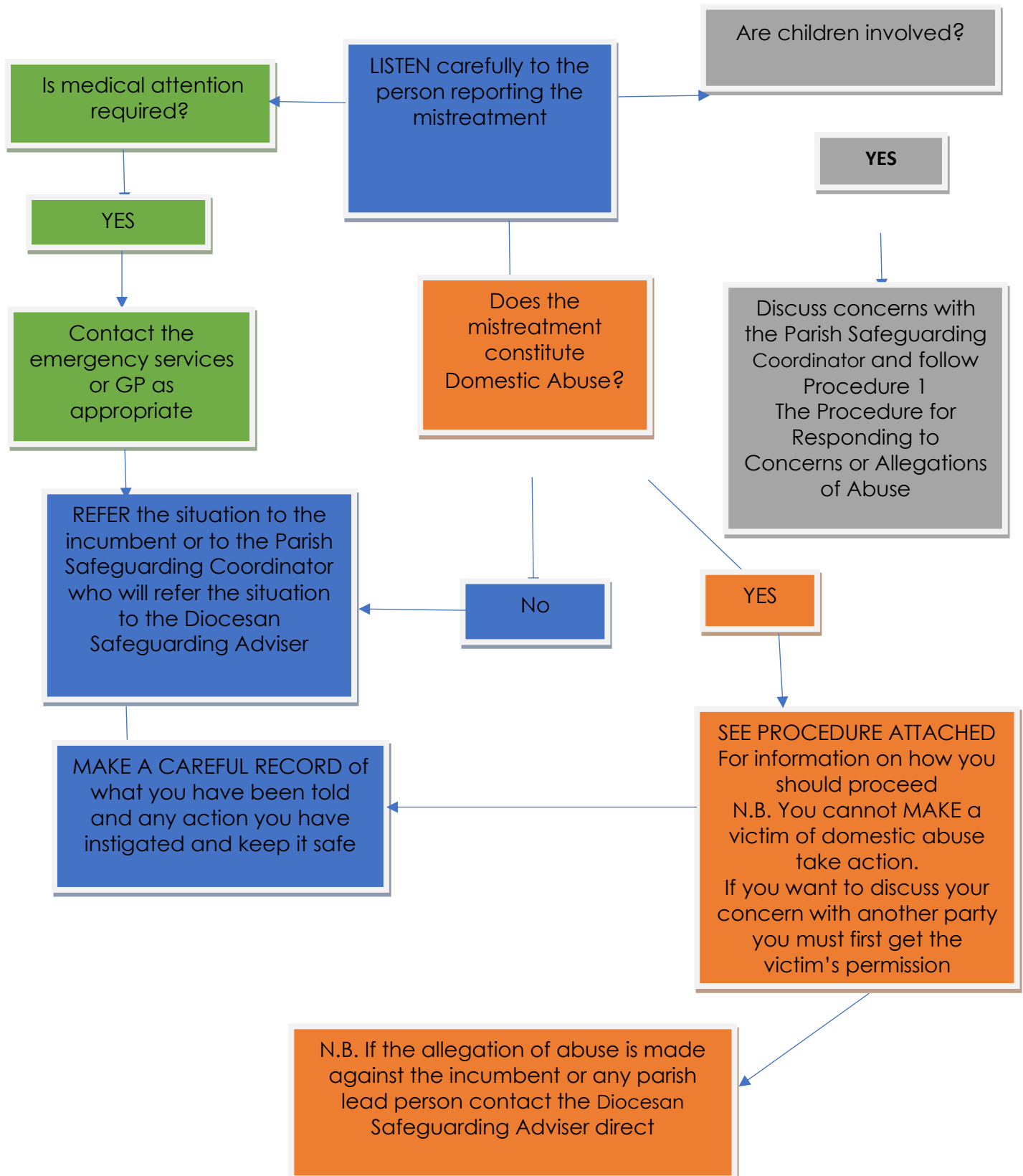
- Make some very brief notes at the time, if appropriate, and write them up in detail as soon as possible.
- Do not destroy your original notes in case they are required by the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser or the statutory authorities.
- Record the date, time, place, words used and how they appeared to you. Record the actual words used, including any swear words or slang.
- 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 Diocesan 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.

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:

- He /she has unexplained bruises or injuries
- He /she shows signs of depression or feeling suicidal
- He /she is unusually quiet or withdrawn
- He /she is having panic attacks
- He /she has frequent absences from work or other commitments
- He /she wears concealing clothing even on warm days
- He /she stops talking about their partner
- He /she is anxious about being out or rushes away suddenly

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

4. RESPOND

- 4.1 Assess whether medical attention is needed and if yes contact the emergency services and tell the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (within 24hrs). Inform the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator / Incumbent of your referral
- 4.2 Ascertain whether there are any children involved and if yes tell the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (within 24hrs) 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 Diocesan 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 Diocesan 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 Diocesan 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/



PROCEDURE C

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 recognise 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 Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor
- 2.5 The incumbent of a previous church
- 2.6 A member of the congregation
- 2.7 A member of the public
- 2.8 The perpetrator themselves

3. RESPONSE

Always contact the Diocesan 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 Diocesan 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 Diocesan 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 Diocesan 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 Diocesan 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 Diocesan 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).



PROCEDURE D USING SOCIAL MEDIA WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE: A CHECK LIST

1. There is a church mobile phone for the Youth Worker that has a separate number from their personal phone. This is the **ONLY** phone that the Youth Worker uses to contact secondary school age children. Primary school age children shall never be contacted via social media or mobile telephone. Instead, all correspondence relating to primary age children shall be via the children's parents or carers.
2. Parental consent to use social media to contact children and young people regarding work related issues will be obtained at initial registration
3. The supervisor or incumbent in liaison with the Children, Family and Schools Worker will review the content of the church phone at regular intervals
4. The use of social media for one-to-one communication with children and young people should be avoided. In the event however of one-to-one communication being deemed absolutely necessary a second person should be copied into the communication or shared with a supervisor as soon as possible (24 hours).
5. Group communication should be the method of choice for communicating online with children and young people. Parents should have the option to be copied into the communication.
6. Face-to-Face conversations in a public place should be used as much as possible when communicating one to one with children and young people
7. The guidance sheet or leaflet entitled 'A Guide to using Social Media for Leaders & Helpers' (from CofE Birmingham Safeguarding team) should be read & followed by all Leaders & helpers for young people aged 10+years.
8. Children and Young people should only receive communication relating to church matters /activities between the hours of 8am until the start of school and 3– 9pm and all day at the weekends.
9. All online communication should only be related to St Mary's Ministry to Children and Young People. No personal information should be communicated under the auspice of the church.
10. Care should be given to the use of language when communicating with children and young people. Keep communication brief and avoid over friendly language
11. Hard copies of all online meaningful conversations should be downloaded shared with the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator or Incumbent and stored confidentially.
12. All photographs taken of children and young people during church activities require parental permission and should only be taken and stored on the church phone.



PROCEDURE E TRANSPORTING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

INTRODUCTION

When transporting children, young people and vulnerable adults it is important to clarify the context in which transport is being offered in order for those who have parental responsibility to give informed consent.

Transport may be provided by a private individual offering to provide transport for other individuals e.g., a parent offering to give a lift to a child or young person of another parent. In this context it is the responsibility of the private individual and the parent or carer involved to obtain/give consent and to negotiate the mutually acceptable arrangements.

Transport may be provided by a church officer acting on behalf of the church or by an individual requested by a church officer to provide a lift to a child or young person or vulnerable adult on behalf of the church. In this case the following procedural guidelines must be followed:

Procedural Guidelines

For the purpose of this procedure the driver is called the approved driver and the additional person accompanying the driver is called the responsible adult

1. All approved drivers must be recruited according to the safer recruitment procedure this will include the requirement for a satisfactory DBS disclosure if the driver is carrying children, young people or a vulnerable adult
2. All approved drivers must give a signed undertaking that s/he will comply with the parish safeguarding policy and the specific guidance regarding transport.
3. In the case of children and young people, another responsible adult must accompany the approved driver, to assist in any emergencies.
4. Children and young people must not be taken out in transport without the prior consent of their parents or carers and the consent recorded
5. A risk assessment for each outing should always be carried out and the details recorded.
6. All those who drive children or vulnerable adults on behalf of the church should normally be over 25 and should have held a full current driving licence for over two years. They should also be required to demonstrate that they have adequate insurance and a current MOT certificate (if applicable)
7. Any person providing or seeking to provide transport on behalf of church who has an endorsement of 6 points or more on their licence must inform the parish safeguarding officer. Any driver who has an "unspent" conviction for a drink driving offence or for Dangerous Driving on the Highway may not transport children or vulnerable adults.
8. Only cars fitted with seat belts both front and rear may be used and the number of children / vulnerable adults transported should not exceed the number of seat belts available.
9. All children should be restrained by an appropriate car seat belt and /or child seat as defined by current legislation. The law contains complex references to child ages and heights and can be summarised as follows

- Children under 12 and under 1.50 meters in height should not be carried in the front of the vehicle
 - Children under 3 should be carried in a child restraint
 - Children under 12 should wear an appropriate child restraint but if this is not available, they should wear an adult belt.
10. It is compulsory for passengers aged over 13 years to wear a safety belt if provided when travelling in a minibus, bus or coach.
11. Unless specifically restricted, a full driving licence entitles holders to drive cars and other vehicles with a maximum capacity of 8 passengers and small buses up to 16 passengers providing they are not being driven for hire or reward,
12. When using a minibus, whether owned, hired or borrowed, all drivers must hold the correct permit on their driving licence or take the appropriate driving test. They must be over 25 and under 70 years of age. There should be another responsible adult travelling in the rear of the bus, in most cases sitting near the door. The responsible adult should ensure a reasonable standard of behaviour and make sure the children remain seated with seat belts fastened.

For more detailed information regarding the eligibility and licencing details for minibus drivers (Please see: Church of England (2019), Safer Environment and Activities. pp. 38. sec 7 (7.8 - 7.12.)

N.B. These safe practice guidelines follow the recommendations stipulated in the following documents

Church of England (2019) Safer Environment and Activities. pp 38 Section 7

Church of England (2019) Promoting a Safer Church

Appendix A

POLICY STATEMENT ON THE RECRUITMENT OF EX-OFFENDERS

The Parochial Church Council of St. Mary's Church, Wythall, agree to adopt the policy commitments below when considering applications for roles within our organisation.

- We are committed to the fair treatment of our current and potential employees, volunteers and office holders, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependants, age, physical/mental disability or offending background.
- As an organisation assessing applicants' suitability for positions which are exempt from the Rehabilitations Act 1974 using criminal record checks processed through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), we will comply fully with the DBS [code of practice](#), all relevant legislation and House of Bishops' [Safer Recruitment & People Management guidance](#) and undertake to treat all applicants for roles fairly.¹
- We are committed to equality of opportunity for all applicants and aim to select people for roles with us based on their skills, abilities, experience, knowledge and, where needed, qualifications and training. We will consider applicants who have a criminal record on their individual merits.
- For roles covered by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act we will not ask an applicant to disclose any criminal history that is spent. We will only ask an applicant about their unspent criminal history.
- For roles that are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act we will ask applicants to disclose all criminal history, spent and unspent (other than protected cautions and convictions). Where we wish to select the person for the role, we will ask them to apply for a DBS check appropriate to the role.
- Where criminal history, or a potential risk of harm, has been disclosed in the recruitment process we will refer this information to the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer for a risk assessment. The Diocesan Safeguarding Officer will advise whether the person may be offered the role. The relevance of the nature of the criminal history to the role applied for will always be assessed and an application will not automatically be refused just because criminal history has been disclosed.
- We will only submit an application for a criminal record check to the DBS after a thorough risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and

¹ Information for applicants about disclosing criminal history is available on the NACRO website:
<https://www.nacro.org.uk/>

relevant to the role. For those roles where a criminal record check is identified as necessary, all application forms, adverts and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that an application for a DBS certificate will be submitted in the event of the individual being offered the position.

- We will ensure that all those who are involved in the recruitment process have received appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders and eligibility of a role for a criminal record check.
- This policy will be made available to all DBS applicants at the start of the recruitment process.
- This will be reviewed annually.

Notes

This document reflects the principles, policies, procedures and practices that are appropriate to St Mary's Church Wythall

1. The St Mary's Parish Safeguarding Policy Procedures and Guidelines for Good Practice follow the recommendations of the following documents:
 - Church of England (2021) *Safer Recruitment and People Management*
 - Church of England: House of Bishops (2021) *Safeguarding Learning and Development*
 - 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*
2. All matters concerning the policy should be raised with the Vicar or the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator.

3. Current Safeguarding Personnel

These are as follows:

Incumbent St Mary's Church is Rev Amanda Featherstone

The Parish Safeguarding Coordinator for St Mary's Church is Dr Amanda Dauncey

The Parish Identity Verifier for St Mary's Church is Mrs Nicola Clarkson

The Children's Advocate for St Mary's Church is Mr Gary Daniel

The Young People's Advocate is Mrs Sonyanette Parker

The Vulnerable Adults Advocate for St Mary's Church is Mrs Linda Yates

ANNUAL REVIEW LOG:

This policy is to be reviewed annually.

Next to be reviewed in June 2026.