

Benefice Safeguarding Policy

The Church of England, in all aspects of its life, is committed to and will promote the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It fully accepts and endorses the Children Act 1989 & 2004 & The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

Christian communities should be places where all people feel **welcomed, respected and safe from abuse**. The Church is particularly called by God to support those less powerful and those without a voice in our society. Our Benefice is working towards creating a **safe and non-discriminatory environment** by being aware of some of the particular situations that create vulnerability. Issues which need to be considered include both the physical environment and the attitudes of workers and volunteers.

A person (adult or child) who might be considered vulnerable has the right to:

- Be treated with respect and dignity.
- Have their privacy respected.
- Be able to lead as independent a life as possible.
- Be able to choose how to lead their life.
- Have the protection of the law.
- Have their rights upheld regardless of their ethnicity, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religion or cultural background.
- Be able to use their chosen language or method of communication.
- Be heard.

In any situations where there may be a difference of opinion about priorities, **the welfare of any child or vulnerable adult should be the paramount concern**.

This Benefice will foster and encourage best practice within its community by setting standards for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. It will work with the Diocesan Safeguarding team, statutory bodies, voluntary agencies and other faith communities to promote the safety and well-being of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

We are committed to acting promptly whenever a concern is raised about a child, young person or vulnerable adult or about the behaviour of an adult in a position of trust, and will work with the Diocesan Team, and the appropriate statutory bodies when an investigation is necessary. We are also committed to the support of those who have been abused and to listening to the voices of survivors, who can help the church learn lessons from the past.

This statement of principles applies to children, young people and adults. We are committed to:

- **The care, nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children, young people and adults**
- Jesus said, let the little children come to me - We therefore wish to create an environment that empowers children and vulnerable adults in worship, trying to move away from negativity and prohibition, towards inclusivity and participation.

To achieve this we will:

- include all ages and abilities in all aspects of worship wherever possible.
 - create safe, free spaces within which children and vulnerable adults can operate autonomously and participate fully.
 - consider the needs of adults and children during each event through integrated planning of activities and elements of the service to ensure the greatest possible inclusion for all.
 - in order to empower those who are vulnerable within our events, ensure that our environments are always - Clear, clean, safe, contained and supervised.
- **The safeguarding and protection of all children and adults**

This will entail an up to date **health and safety check** of the church (and any other space being used) before each event.

All events will have a **supervised perimeter** that will allow for a free flowing and empowered environment within.

To this end, there will be designated **safe adults*** supervising entrances and exits during events - ensuring that vulnerable people only exit the space with their parent or carer.

A minimum of two designated safe adults* will be available during each event to supervise any activity taking place outside of the collective worship environment (e.g. grounds or Church Hall or elsewhere)

Lone Working: The structuring of inclusive worship events should prevent the need for lone working. Should an adult find themselves alone with vulnerable people then they should encourage them to return to the group setting, or attract another safe adult to join them.

* We define a **safe adult** as one who has a current valid DBS check and has received appropriate safeguarding training for their level of involvement. Their role is not only to be vigilant for risk, but importantly to model best practice and safe behaviour in order to help children learn what safe adults are like. This in turn will make children more attuned to appropriate adult behaviour and less susceptible to abuse or exploitation. Safe adults should receive update training on safeguarding and the approach to empowering vulnerable people every three years or as directed by the Diocese.

This will lead to:

- **The establishment of a safe, caring community which provides an environment where there is a culture of informed vigilance regarding the dangers of abuse, and where victims of abuse can report or disclose abuse and find support.**
- **The promotion of best practice that contributes to the prevention of abuse.**

The safeguarding and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility, not just parents or those who have formal leadership or caring responsibilities. Procedures and formal processes alone, though essential, will not protect children and adults. The community, including all its members, needs to be aware of the dangers and be prepared to report concerns and take action if necessary.

We will therefore make our policy available to all those who attend our events and encourage our congregation to engage in regular training as required by the Diocese on the church's approach to safeguarding and empowering vulnerable people.

Safer Recruitment:

We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility for children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church in line with safer recruitment principles, including taking up references and the use of criminal records checks.

The suitability of an applicant or nominated volunteer for work with children, young people or vulnerable adult should not be solely dependent upon Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) disclosures and vetting checks. Someone whose DBS disclosure is clear may still be unsuitable. Hence the need for an interview and references to assure ourselves, as far as we can, that someone is suitable.

As part of the Safer Recruitment process, it is the policy of this Benefice that:

- All those who regularly work with children, young people and vulnerable adults including those who work on a rota, should have enhanced DBS checks if they reach the criteria;
- Those who work only occasionally will be asked to apply for a DBS check if they reach the criteria;
- Those who manage or supervise people who work with vulnerable groups will be required to be DBS plus Barred List checked if they reach the criteria.

This Benefice accepts that, through its workers and volunteers, it is responsible for children, young people and vulnerable adults when in a church building, on church property and other premises being used by the church and during church activities. Responsibility extends to travel between places, when it is organized by the church. However, a church is not responsible for private arrangements.

Complaints:

The term 'complaint' can cover an allegation, disclosure or statement, something seen or something heard. The complaint need not be made in writing but once received it must be recorded and acted upon. Complaints can be taken from alleged victims and third parties.

If a child, young person or vulnerable adult comes to notice as having suffered abuse in the past, church officers will notify the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and appropriate authorities to ensure that the matter is on record. Support will be offered to adult survivors of child abuse, who will also be encouraged to make a statement to the Police if they have not done so before.

We will seek to offer informed pastoral care and support to anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry that recognises the importance of understanding the needs of those who have been abused, including their feelings of alienation and / or isolation. We recognise that anyone can be a victim of abuse in any setting, including in their own home, and in a church environment, and will work hard to make our church a safe place for people to disclose any concerns they have and receive appropriate support. We will seek to protect survivors of abuse from the possibility of further harm and abuse.

We will seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust and responsibility, where they are trusted by others.

We will seek to offer pastoral care and support, including supervision, and referral to the appropriate authorities, to any member of our Church community known to have offended against a child, young person or adult who is vulnerable. We will support them in continuing to attend church services whilst supervising their attendance to reduce the risk of further harm.

This Benefice agrees to follow the Practice Guidance from the House of Bishops on safeguarding matters, and to adopt the Diocese of Bath and Wells Safeguarding Policies.