

St. Mary the Virgin, Walkern



Protecting All God's Children

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CHILD PROTECTION CO-ORDINATOR

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SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY

STATEMENT OF INTENT

We, the people of the Parish of St. Mary the Virgin, Walkern seek to safeguard all members of the church community, of all ages. It is the responsibility of each one of us to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults. This policy pertains to young people and vulnerable adults.

INTRODUCTION

The above statement, and the following document, which contains the code of Practice and the Statement of Policy adopted by the PCC of the Parish of St. Mary the Virgin, Walkern, is in line with the recommendations laid out by the Diocese. This policy has been developed in line with that of St Peter's, Benington.

TERMS

A "young person" is defined as anyone under the age of eighteen years.

"Premises" refers to the church building in its entirety, and also recognised premises used by church groups for church meetings, e.g. people's homes.

"Leader" refers to the church's recognised leaders of children's and youth events.

"Senior leader" refers to the recognised person carrying overall responsibility for a specific sector of children's or youth work, i.e. Holiday Club and any special event.

PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

RATIO OF STAFF TO CHILDREN / YOUNG PEOPLE

Indoor activities, children under eight years

Staff-children ratios, required under the Children Act:

- 0-2 years: 1 member of staff to 3 children
- 2-3 years: 1 member of staff to 4 children
- 3-7 years: 1 member of staff to 8 children

It should be noted that the above are ratios of adults to children. On no account should a worker be by themselves with the age group. The minimum number of adults should always be two and preferably three.

Indoor activities, children eight years and over

The recommended ratios for staff-children and young people:

- up to 20 children and / or young people, two adults (preferably one of each gender)
- one additional adult for every 10 extra children / young people, or part thereof.

Outdoor activities, under eight years

Staff-children ratios, required under the Children Act:

- 0-2 years: 1 member of staff to 3 children
- 2-3 years: 1 member of staff to 4 children
- 4-7 years: 1 member of staff to 6 children

Outdoor activities, children / young people eight to thirteen years

The recommended ratios for staff-children and young people:

- up to 15 children and / or young people: 2 adults (preferably one of each gender)
- 1 additional adult for every 8 extra children / young people or part thereof.

GENERAL HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS

A safe meeting environment

- Access to the meeting place should be well lit, and there should be adequate heating, lighting and ventilation in the venue.
- The location of fire-fighting equipment should be known.
- Food and drink should be prepared hygienically and carefully.
- Toilets should be hygienic
- The premises should be checked for any hazards, e.g. piles of chairs that might fall over, equipment with sharp edges, unprotected heaters.
- All electrical equipment in use should be checked regularly by a qualified electrician.

- An Accident File should be kept by each group, in which any accidents should be recorded which happen at the group, and any incident which might be questioned afterwards, e.g. the circumstances leading up to a young person being taken home because of disruptive behaviour. The date, a brief account of what happened, the action taken and the names of the individuals involved should be recorded.
- Each group should maintain a first-aid kit, and keep it up to date. The kit should contain Accident Forms to be filled in whenever the kit is needed, and which should be filed in the Accident File as soon as possible. Each should also contain the name of the person responsible for maintaining it, so that he / she can be informed of the use of any items.
- Each group should appoint one person to be responsible for maintaining the first aid kit. He / she must be informed when any items from the kit are used.
- There should be someone in each group, or on the premises, with a knowledge of first aid, and who is responsible for using the first aid kit.

Safe practice

- No adult should work alone with one or more child.
- Ensure that meetings with children take place where all parties can be seen. This may mean leaving doors open or two groups working in the same room.
- If only one activity is taking place on the premises, two adults must always be present.
- In a counselling situation with a young person, where privacy and confidentiality are important, make sure that there is another adult in the building who knows the meeting is taking place and with whom.
- Do not invite a child or young person to your home, or someone else's, alone. Invite a group to ensure that someone else is in the house. Make sure the parents know where the child is.
- No group should be taken away from premises where the group meets without at least two adults present. The Senior leader in charge of the activity, or the person with pastoral oversight, should always be informed when children are taken off the premises.
- Children and young people in our care should be made aware of *Childline* and its telephone number, by means of notices displayed in the entrance porch of each church.

Communicating with parents

- When new members come along to the group, it is important to give parents, as soon as reasonably possible, relevant information about the group and the care you provide for their child / young person.

- It is recommended that, where contact has not previously been made with the parents, a visit is made to the home - with a letter or introduction pack.
- Parents should be asked to sign a Consent Form for general activities and, where appropriate, an additional consent form relating to outings and residential trips.
- At each session a phone should be available for incoming and outgoing calls.
- The parents / guardians should have a note of the phone number in case they need to contact their child.
- The leaders should have a telephone contact number for each young person's parent / guardian.

In line with the procedures laid down in **Protecting All God's Children** The Policy for Safeguarding Children in the Church of England (Church House publishing 2010), we will:

- adopt and implement a safeguarding children policy and procedures, accepting as a minimum the House of Bishops' Policy on Safeguarding Children(see page 7)but informed by additional diocesan procedures and recommended good practice, while being responsive to local parish requirements;
- appoint a co-ordinator to implement policy and procedures and be the first point of contact for any child protection concerns and who will report annually on the implementation of the policy to the PCC;
- consider, when appropriate, appointing a person, who may be different from the coordinator, to be a children's advocate. This should be someone whom children know they could talk to about any problems, if they so wish. It can be useful if the co-ordinator is not someone whom children know personally;
- display in church premises where children's activities take place, the contact details of the co-ordinator or children's advocate, along with the 'Childline' and 'Family Lives' telephone numbers;
- ensure that all those authorised to work with children are appropriately recruited according to safer recruitment practice, and CRB checked. CRB records will be held by the Parish Administrator. All CRB checks should be renewed every 5 years;
- ensure that in any activity there must be at least 2 adults present at all times when supervising children;

- ensure that there is appropriate insurance cover for all activities involving children undertaken in the name of the parish;
- review the implementation of the safeguarding children policy, procedures and good practice, at least annually;
- consider joining together with Benington to implement the policy and procedures, while remembering that legal responsibility will continue to rest with the individual parishes;
- within the Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP), agree which denomination or organization's safeguarding children policy to follow, including where to seek advice in urgent situations. This decision should be ratified both by the bishop and other appropriate church leaders in the partnership;
- in the event of a specific safeguarding concern, ensure that all the LEP partners are notified.

Principles of the House of Bishops' Policy for Safeguarding Children

Every person has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of male and female in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this potential as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.

Principles

We are committed to:

- _ The care, nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children and all adults
- _ The safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable
- _ The establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is a culture of 'informed vigilance' as to the dangers of abuse. We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility within the Church, in line with safer recruitment principles, including the use of criminal records disclosures and registration with the relevant vetting and barring schemes.

We will respond without delay to every complaint made which suggests that an adult, child or young person may have been harmed, co-operating with the police and local authority in any investigation.

We will seek to work with anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with him or her an appropriate ministry of informed pastoral care.

We will seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust.

We will seek to offer pastoral care and support, including supervision and referral to the proper authorities, to any member of our church community known to have offended against a child, young person or vulnerable adult. In all these principles we will follow legislation, guidance and recognized good practice.

ENSURING APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR RELATING SAFELY TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity befitting their age; taking care that your language, tone of voice and “body language” are all appropriate.
- Do not engage in any of the following:
 - ⊕ invading the privacy of children / young people when they are showering or toileting.
 - ⊕ any form of game which may appear to be sexually provocative.
 - ⊕ making sexually suggestive comments about or to a young person, even in “fun”.
 - ⊕ inappropriate and intrusive touching of any form.
 - ⊕ any ridiculing, scapegoating or rejecting of a child or young person.
- Control and discipline children and young people without using physical punishment (see Benefice document: *Working with Children and Young People: Disciplinary Procedures*).
- If there are incidents, e.g. fighting, in which injuries occur, one of the leaders present should write and sign a report that day, and a second leader present should sign it that day also. This should be given to the Senior leader to keep on file in case required.
- Make sure another adult is present if, for example, a young child has soiled their underclothes and needs to be thoroughly washed.
- Do not let children or young people involve you in excessive attention seeking that is overtly sexual or physical in nature.
- Be aware of circumstances in which any child is shown special attention, either being highly favoured or treated unduly harshly. Senior leaders and those with pastoral oversight should take opportunities to observe those for whom they are responsible as they work with children or young people.
- Teenagers and helpers should not be given overall responsibility for any activity or meeting.

ACTION IN THE EVENT OF NON-ADHERENCE TO THIS CODE OF PRACTICE

- Staff and volunteers who discover breaches of this policy statement and code of practice should report the matter to their Senior leader or The Rector.
- Senior leaders should encourage an atmosphere of mutual support and care which allows all workers with children and young people to be comfortable enough to discuss inappropriate attitudes or behaviour.

DEALING WITH AN ALLEGATION

Early recognition of abuse or neglect can prevent serious harm to children and the break-up of families, by ensuring that appropriate action is taken and help

offered when it is likely to be most effective.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT A CHILD IS BEING ABUSED

Do not delay in consulting with The Rector.

ROLE OF THE CHURCH'S CHILD SAFETY CO-ORDINATOR

A Child Safety Co-ordinator is appointed by the PCC. The Co-ordinator's role is to:

- keep up-to-date with best practice guidelines;
- be the person to whom anyone who suspects a case of abuse should refer;
- make contact with the local Social Services, on behalf of the church, when appropriate.

ROLE OF THE BISHOP'S REPRESENTATIVE, AND SOCIAL WORKERS

The Bishop's Representative must be informed of any report made to Social Services. He / she will inform the Bishop and then discuss the report with the Child Protection Unit of the Social Services department of the appropriate authority. Social workers will then assume a primary role in caring for the child / young person and his or her family. The church will not, and cannot, undertake an investigative role, but may act as a reporting agency.

DEALING WITH RUMOUR OF ABUSE

A person may report a rumour about a particular individual, rather than a specific allegation. The person who expresses unease should be asked to give their reasons for concern to the Child Safety Co-ordinator. The person reporting the rumour should be asked to think very carefully about the implication for children and for the suspected individual of what they have said. If rumours persist, the Child Safety Co-ordinator should make a report to the Bishop's Representative, who will discuss the matter with Social Services and also inform the Bishop.

DEALING WITH FALSE ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

Those who work in isolated settings with children and young people are sometimes vulnerable to false allegations. If a recognised worker with one of the groups is uneasy about their dealings with a child / young person, or about how their dealings with them might be interpreted, they should make a record of events, sign and date it, and ask a fellow-worker who was present at the incident to sign and date it also. The report should then be given to the Senior leader who should file it, and seek advice, support and, where appropriate, supervision from the Child Safety Co-ordinator, as soon as possible. Difficult situations should always be referred to the Child Safety Co-ordinator.

CONFIDENTIALITY, AND THE CONFSSIONAL DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE

People who abuse children are unlikely to disclose such practice. However, should a priest receive a confession from someone who has abused a child, in law the interests of the child are paramount. If, allegedly, a crime has been committed, the person making the confession should be encouraged to report the abuse to Social Services or the police.

A distinction needs to be made between the confession of past abuse, and a declaration of intent in the future. In the case of continuing abuse, although the perpetrator's right to confidentiality is important, it is not absolute. It may not be possible to maintain confidentiality if a child may be at risk, or if the person threatens harm to himself / herself, or another person. The lack of absolute right to confidentiality in such a situation should be made clear to the person concerned at the time of disclosure, or potential disclosure.

WELFARE OF THE CHILD, OUR PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY

The overwhelming consideration must be to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. If a person tells an accredited group leader that they know or suspect that a member of the clergy, an accredited lay minister, a member of the staff or a volunteer is behaving in a manner contrary to the guidelines, then it is essential for this to be taken seriously. The personal cost to someone of making a complaint may be very high and it is important to make the person know they are respected and listened to. The temptation may be to become defensive about the person being suspected or the group they represent.

PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCTING A CONVERSATION WITH A CHILD WHO IS DISCLOSING ABUSE

Basic principles

Any conversation with a child should, as far as possible, adhere to the following basic principles:

- listen to the child rather than question him or her. Do believe the child.
- never stop a child who is freely recalling significant events.

- as soon as you can, make a note of the meeting, taking care to record the timing, setting, and persons present, as well as what was said.
- a comprehensive record of all the facts, events and conversations must be made on the same day as they occur. Known facts should be distinguished from allegation and opinions. This information may be required for legal purposes.

General points

- look at the child / young person directly.
- try to keep your eye level equal to or lower than the child's or young person's.
- do not promise confidentiality.
- assume that the child / young person has been threatened if they tell.
- help the child / young person trust his or her feelings.
- try to find out what they are afraid of, so that you will know how best to help.
- make notes as soon as possible. Try to write down exactly what the child / young person said, in his / her own words.

Helpful things to say

- I believe you.
- I am glad that you told me.
- I am sorry that it happened.
- It is not your fault.
- I care, and I will help.
- You were right to tell, and it is OK to tell.
- You were brave to tell.
- The abuser was wrong (It is better not to say "bad").
- Even if the child / young person has broken a rule, he or she is not to blame.

Things to avoid saying:

- Why? How? When? Where? Who?
- Are you sure?
- Why didn't you say before?
- I can't believe it.
- Statements such as: "This is really serious." "Don't tell anyone." "I'm shocked."
- False promises.

Finishing the conversation

- Tell the child / young person again that you believe him / her.
- Let the child / young person know what you are going to do and, as far as possible, what is going to happen next.
- Praise the child / young person for telling, and for surviving the abuse.

APPENDICES

CONTACT NAMES AND NUMBERS

It is recommended that each group for children / young people using church premises adopt similar provisions to those shown here for other Church events.

DESIGNATED CHURCH PERSONNEL

To be nominated by PCC in first meeting of new PCC year. Term of office to run for one year, with possibility of re-nomination.

Child Safety Co-ordinator: (As per page 1)

To receive reports of breaches of this policy, to give advice, and to liaise with outside agencies.

The names and contact numbers of the current designated personnel are posted in the Church porch.

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Note: Except for Childline, contact with the following agencies should be made in the first instance by the Church's Child Safety Co-ordinator.

CHILDLINE 0800-1111

A helpline for children and young people which offers counselling advice, particularly for children and young people suffering abuse.

NSPCC HELPLINE 088-800-500

National voluntary organisation concerned with protecting children from abuse. The helpline is open 24 hours a day, every day of the year. It offers advice, and can direct to other sources of help.

POLICE: CHILD PROTECTION UNIT (Stevenage) 01438-757079

SOCIAL SERVICES:

CHILD PROTECTION INVESTIGATING TEAM 01992-556316

Vale House, 43 Cowbridge, Hertford