

St. Mary the Virgin, Bathwick, Bath



Parish Safeguarding Policy

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Parish Safeguarding Policy Promoting a Safer Church

In accordance with the Church of England Safeguarding Policy our church is committed to:

- Promoting a safer environment and culture
- Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church
- Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation.
- Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons
- Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others

The Parish will:

- Create a safe and caring place for all.
- Have a named Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) to work with the incumbent and the PCC to implement policy and procedures.
- Safely recruit, train and support all those with any responsibility for children, young people and adults to have the confidence and skills to recognise and respond to abuse
- Ensure that there is appropriate insurance cover for all activities involving children and adults undertaken in the name of the church.
- Display in church premises and on the Parish website the details of who to contact if there are safeguarding concerns or support needs.
- Listen to and take seriously all those who disclose abuse.
- Take steps to protect children and adults when a safeguarding concern of any kind arises, following House of Bishops guidance, including notifying the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor and statutory agencies immediately.
- Offer support to victims/survivors of abuse regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred.
- Care for and monitor any member of the church community who may pose a risk to children and adults whilst maintaining appropriate confidentiality and safety of all parties.
- Ensure that health and safety policy, procedures and risk assessments are in place and that these are reviewed annually.
- Review the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Practices at least annually.

Each person who works within this church community will agree to abide by this policy and the guidelines established by this church.

The person appointed as Parish Safeguarding Officer is : Nicola Parker.....

This policy was agreed at the Parochial Church Council meeting held on27.05.25.....

Appendix 1

Procedures for reporting suspected abuse.

If you are concerned about a child or adult and/or you are concerned that a church officer may be abusing a child or adult.

1. Respond well to the victim/survivor, if it is a direct disclosure, to ensure they feel listened to and taken seriously. Explain what will happen next and check out support requirements. They should be informed that their identity and the identity of the respondent will be shared with key church officers, and may be shared with statutory agencies, if there is any current risk to children or adults. The concern or allegation should not be shared with anyone other than those who need to know (eg the statutory agencies and appropriate church officers)
2. **Emergency** – If you believe a child or adult is in immediate danger of significant or serious harm, contact the emergency services on 999
3. **Non-emergency** – Contact the Parish Safeguarding Officer or incumbent, in the first instance. They **must** then contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA). If neither are available, contact the DSA directly. If the concern arises in an activity, discuss with the group/activity leader, who will contact the Parish Safeguarding Officer or incumbent.
4. Any safeguarding concerns **must** be reported to the DSA **within 24 hours**.
5. If the PSO/incumbent or the DSA are not available within 24 hours, contact Children's Social Care or Adult Social Care and/or the police directly, if the concern is that a child or adult is being abused. Contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and/or police if the concern is that a church officer may be abusing a child or adult.

Advise the Parish Safeguarding Officer or incumbent as soon as possible that you have made a referral; they will advise the DSA.

If in doubt don't delay – seek advice from statutory agencies.

6. 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 DSA or statutory agencies.
7. Record the details of the concern or allegation. Where it is not appropriate to take notes at the time (usually it will not be), 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 received, eg by telephone, face-to-face conversation letter, etc. The record should include details of information provided to that person as well as the information received. Always sign and date the record. Keep it factual. Pass on a copy to the DSA (and /or the PSO/incumbent). The records should be kept secure and confidential.

If the concern is about a child or adult

8. The DSA will act in line with the House of Bishop's guidance. They will offer advice, support and guidance and help to make the required referrals. If there is a risk of harm, the concerns must be reported to the statutory agencies within 24 hours of the DSA receiving the concerns. This would be Children's or Adult Social Care and/or the police.

There should be close communication between the DSA and PSO/incumbent until the situation is resolved. The archdeacon should also be informed.

If the concern also involves a church officer

9. The DSA will act in line with the House of Bishop's guidance. They will offer advice, support and guidance and refer the concerns to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and/or police within 24 hours. The DSA will now take over management of the safeguarding concern in conjunction with the core group (which will be convened within 48 hours) and statutory agencies. There may also be a requirement for parish representatives to attend a subsequent core group/s. If there are doubts about whether or not to make a referral and under what route, the DSA will seek advice from the LADO.

Please note that the procedure is the same for non-recent abuse.

A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and adults, and respecting the rights of the person against whom an allegation is made. In such circumstances the welfare 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 have been assured.

Appendix 2

Use of Social Media

Social media should be used safely to avoid the risk of

- Forming inappropriate relationships
- Saying things you should not, such as offensive, sexual or suggestive comments
- Blurring the boundaries between public work/ministry and your private life
- Grooming and impersonation
- Bullying and harassment

The Role of the PCC

The PCC must approve the use of social media and mobile phones by the church. Where there are Facebook or similar online groups set up on the church's behalf, the PCC must ensure there is a named person to whom all workers are accountable.

The named person must be a church officer and should be aware of the account name and password so that they can at any time log on to the account to monitor the communications. The named person should be proactive in this role.

At St Mary's the named person is.....Rev. Peter Edwards.....

Communications must be shared with the named person. Church officers remain bound by professional rules of confidentiality. Where there is concern that a young person or adult is at risk of abuse, or they themselves pose a risk of abuse to others, safeguarding procedures must always be followed.

Guidance for Church Officers

Do:

- have your eyes open and be vigilant
- maintain the utmost integrity – honesty, transparency, consistency and accountability are key. Treat online communication with children, young people and adults as you would communication that is face to face. Always maintain the same level of confidentiality.
- report any safeguarding concerns that arise on social media to the Parish Safeguarding Officer and the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor.
- always assume that everything you write is permanent and may be viewed by anyone at any time; and that everything can be traced back to you personally as well as to your colleagues or the church. Always think before you post.
- draw clear boundaries around your social media usage associated with your private life and your use of different social media for public ministry. Keep church accounts and profiles separate from your personal social media.
- always ask parents/carers for consent to:
 - o use and store photographs of children/young people from activities or events in official church publications, or on the church's social media, website and displays
 - o use telephone, text message, email and other messaging services to communicate with young people.
 - o allow young people to connect to the church's social media pages.
- avoid one-to-one communication with a child or young person.
- use clear and unambiguous language in all communications and avoid abbreviations that could be misinterpreted.
- use passwords and log off promptly after use to ensure that nobody else can use social media pretending to be you.

Do not:

- use a personal Facebook or any other social media account in your work with children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- say anything on social media that you would not be happy saying in a public meeting, to someone's face, writing in a local newspaper or on headed notepaper
- use visual media (eg Skype, Facetime) for one-to-one conversations with young people – use only in group settings

In particular do not allow content to contain or share links to other sites that contain:

- libellous, defamatory, bullying or harassing comments
- breaches of copyright and data protection
- material of an illegal nature
- offensive sexual or abusive references
- inappropriate language
- anything which may be harmful to a child, young person or vulnerable adult, or which may bring the church into disrepute or compromise its reputation.