

SAFER Church

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults: Policy and Procedure



South Cleley Benefice

*Potterspury with Furtho and Yardley Gobion,
Cosgrove and Wicken*

This Policy and Procedure was adopted at all of the Parochial Church Council meetings held in September 2026

It follows and is consistent with the Church of England House of Bishops' 'Promoting a Safer Church 2017,' 'Protecting All God's Children" 4th edition 2010, and Safer Recruitment Policy 2013 (Church of England and Methodist Church)

*Each person who works with children, young people and vulnerable adults
will agree to abide by this policy.*

It will be reviewed annually, accepted and written in the minutes of each PCC.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Church of England's Safeguarding Policy for children, young people and adults was formally adopted by the Diocese of Peterborough at the Diocesan Synod in March 2017.

This policy is the recommended Diocese of Peterborough Safeguarding policy and within it adopts and takes into account the House of Bishops safeguarding policy for children, young people and adults, 2017.

The care and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in Church activities is the responsibility of the whole Church. Everyone who participates in the life of the Church has a role to play in promoting a Safer Church for all.

Under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, all authorised clergy, bishops, archdeacons, licensed readers and lay workers, churchwardens and PCCs must have 'due regard' to safeguarding guidance issued by the House of Bishops (this will include both policy and practice guidance). A duty to have 'due regard' to guidance means that the person under the duty is not free to disregard it but is required to follow it unless there are cogent reasons for not doing so. ('Cogent' for this purpose means clear, logical and convincing.) Failure by clergy to comply with the duty imposed by the 2016 Measure may result in disciplinary action. (*Church of England Safeguarding Children Young People, Adults 2017*)

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. The PCC will embed the Church of England Policy which is based on **5 foundations** and **6 overarching policy commitments** alongside the Diocese Safeguarding policy and procedures:

For the purposes of this document a child is anyone under the age of eighteen years.

**For advice on all safeguarding issues including allegations or suspicions of abuse contact:
01733 887000 or safeguarding@peterborough-diocese.org.uk**

2. PROMOTING A SAFER CHURCH

Adopting the Church of England's Safeguarding Policy for children, young people and adults – 2017

Safeguarding means the action that we take to promote a safer culture. This means we will: promote the welfare of children, young people and adults working to prevent abuse from occurring, seek to protect those that are at risk of being abused and respond well to those that have been abused.

We will take care to identify where a person may present a risk to others, offer and support them whilst taking steps to mitigate such risks.

Our church will take appropriate steps to maintain a safer environment for all and to practice fully and positively Christ's Ministry towards children, young people and adults. To respond sensitively and compassionately to their needs in order to help keep them safe from harm.

We are guided by the following **5 foundations**:

1. Gospel – being faithful to our call to share the gospel compels us to take with the utmost seriousness the challenge of preventing abuse from happening and responding well where it has
2. Human Rights and the Law – safeguarding work is undertaken within a legislative framework supported by government guidance
3. Core Principles – welfare of the child, young person and vulnerable adult is paramount
4. Good Safeguarding Practice – includes: leadership commitment; safeguarding policy; clear lines of accountability; clear reporting procedures and record keeping and effective information sharing/ working with partner agencies
5. Learning from the past – statutory reports and independent reviews into abuse that have involved the Church of England highlight past errors and significant lessons learnt to improve safeguarding

Based on the 5 foundations outlined above we commit to the following **6 overarching policy commitments**:

1. Promoting a Safer environment and culture
2. Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the Church
3. Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation
4. Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons
5. Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons
6. Responding to those that may pose a risk to others

A copy of The Church of England's Safeguarding Policy for children, young people and adults can be found here: Click on the below and press the option 'open hyperlink'

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media/3896819/cofe-policy-statement.pdf>

3. DIOCESAN, PARISH AND CATHEDRAL CHURCH SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Our 6 overarching safeguarding policy commitments are:

1. Promoting a safer environment and culture

We will strive to create and maintain environments that are safer for all, that promote well-being, that prevent abuse, and that create nurturing, caring conditions within the Church for children, young people and vulnerable adults. Our Church Officers will respect all children, young people and vulnerable adults and promote their well-being.

2. Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children and vulnerable adults within the Church

We will select and vet all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the Church, in accordance with the House of Bishops safeguarding policy and practice guidance. We will train and equip 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.

3. Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation

Anyone who brings any safeguarding suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation of current or non-current abuse to the notice of the Church will be responded to respectfully and in a timely manner, in line with statutory child and adult safeguarding procedures and the House of Bishops safeguarding policy and practice guidance.

4. Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons

We will endeavour to offer care and support to all those that have been abused, regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred. Those who have suffered abuse within the Church will receive a compassionate response, be listened to and be taken seriously.

5. Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons

The Church in exercising its responsibilities to suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations of abuse will endeavour to respect the rights under criminal, civil and ecclesiastical law of an accused Church Officer including the clergy. A legal presumption of innocence will be maintained during the statutory and Church inquiry processes. The Church will take responsibility for ensuring that steps are taken to protect others when any Church Officer is considered a risk to children, young people and vulnerable adults.

6. Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others

The Church, based on the message of the gospel, opens its doors to all. We will therefore endeavour to offer pastoral care and support to any member of the church community whom may present a known risk. The Church will ensure that any risk has been assessed and is being managed in a safeguarding agreement in accordance with House of Bishops policy and practice guidance.

This can be printed and displayed within the church premises – in high footfall areas

4. RESPONDING TO A CHILD OR ADULT WHO MAY BE DISCLOSING ABUSE

We will ensure that when we are responding to a child or adult who may be disclosing abuse we will follow the relevant policies for: Protecting All God's Children, 2010 and Responding Well to Domestic Abuse, 2017.

We will endeavour to:

- Listen carefully, take the child or adult seriously
- Tell the child s/he has done the right thing by telling
- Clarify if necessary
- Say, if we can, what we will do next
- Make an accurate record as soon as possible
- Refer the matter to the Parish Safeguarding Officer, Vicar who will liaise with the DSA

We will not

- Promise confidentiality
- Investigate
- Ask leading questions
- Repeatedly question/ask the child or adult to repeat the disclosure over and over

Imminent risk

- If we encounter a child in a situation where the child or adult is in imminent danger, we will act immediately to secure the safety of the child or adult. We will seek the assistance of the police and then make a referral to Local Authority Social Care in accordance with the Child and Adult Protection Procedure below. If a child or adult needs emergency medical attention, we will seek this immediately and directly from the emergency services. We will keep parents, if available, fully informed, (*notwithstanding paragraph 6 on page 7 below*).

5. CHILD AND ADULT PROTECTION PROCEDURE

We will follow the procedure below where there is concern that a child or vulnerable adult has been harmed as a result of abuse and urgent action is needed

1. If there is concern that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of harm, inform the Parish Safeguarding Officer or Incumbent who will take advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) or Local Authority Social Care. ***If the incumbent is implicated, inform the DSA.***
2. If there is concern that a child or vulnerable adult has been harmed, immediately inform the Parish Safeguarding Officer or Incumbent or DSA and agree who will make the referral to Local Authority Social Care team. If no-one is available, contact the Local Authority Social Care Team or Police directly.
3. Make an immediate telephone referral to the Local Authority Social Care. Make it clear from the first point of contact that you are making a child or adult protection referral.
4. Describe the event or disclosure and give information about the child and family or adult for example the child/adult's name, date of birth, address, telephone number and GP if known.
5. Follow up your telephone call with a completed referral form (available on the Local Authority web site) or letter. This should be acknowledged. If it is not, chase it.
6. Remember that the child and family should, wherever possible, be informed about and consent to the referral ***unless this would put the welfare of the child or vital interests of the adult who may be vulnerable, or another person at further risk. If you have serious concerns, the absence of consent should not prevent a referral.*** The Duty Social Worker will give you advice over this if necessary.
7. Be prepared to have further discussions with the social work team or the police investigation team. Say if you do not want your details disclosed to the family.
8. For out of hours' referrals, call the Emergency Social Work Team or where urgent, the Police.
9. Consult with the DSA at any point in this process but in any case always ensure the DSA is informed of the concern and actions taken.

Do not delay your referral. Clergy and Diocesan Officers are NOT authorised to investigate any allegations and must never attempt to do so. Only the Police and the Local Authorities are granted such powers in law. Most situations are not emergencies.

However: If a child or adult who may be vulnerable needs immediate medical help, call emergency services, and ensure that ambulance and hospital staff are informed of any protection concerns.

If it would be dangerous for the child or adult who may be vulnerable to return home, or he or she does not want to return home and you are sufficiently concerned for their safety, contact the emergency social care service or the police.

If you observe a child or adult being harmed by someone other than a family member, or you believe they are at risk of harm from someone other than a family member, you should inform the parents or carers immediately, so that an appropriate referral to the police or social care can be made.

6. WHO TO CONTACT WHERE THERE IS WORRY ABOUT A CHILD OR ADULT

Office hours: Monday – Friday 8am – 4.30pm

Out of office:

If a child or adult is in serious danger, then phone 999 / 101

In the event of any other safeguarding concern then please contact the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for your area: Northants MASH: 01604 626938

Other useful numbers:

Childline: 0800 1111

NSPCC: 0808 800 5000

National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247

Samaritans Helpline: 08457 90 90 90

CCPAS 0303 003 11 11

If any of these options are taken, then please email the details to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser safeguarding@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

7. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS TRAINING

The Parish will make every effort to ensure that clergy, licensed workers and lay ministers, volunteers and employees working with children and vulnerable adults regularly seek and obtain safeguarding training to the level of their responsibility. Clergy should attend the relevant Diocesan Safeguarding training. Refresher training should be undertaken once every three years.

8. SAFER RECRUITMENT

- All church workers with children and adults will complete and sign an application form and confidential declaration
- Written references and identification will be required and will be carefully checked
- A criminal disclosure will be required in relation to all eligible roles
- All church workers with children and adults will be interviewed in relation to a role/job description or person specification
- After appointment support and training will be offered

9. THOSE WHO POSE A RISK TO CHILDREN

When it is known that a member of the congregation, or someone wishing to join the congregation, has sexually abused a child or young person, or is not a sexual offender against children but nevertheless may pose a risk, we will consult with the DSA, so that a safe course of action in accordance with recommended Church of England procedure can be pursued in conjunction with the relevant statutory agencies.

10. CARE OF SURVIVORS OF ABUSE AND THEIR FAMILIES

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

11. RECORD KEEPING AND STORAGE

Notes will be made of all safeguarding incidents involving children or adults. They will be treated confidentially and will be securely stored by the incumbent or designated person. They will be retained even if the information received was judged to be malicious, unsubstantiated or unfounded. During an interregnum, the designated person will be responsible for all safeguarding records which will be passed to the incoming incumbent.

12. SAFER PRACTICE WITH CHILDREN

We will ensure our work with children is carried out in a 'safe' environment in accordance with Safe Parish Guidelines

- The ratio of leaders to children will comply with the Children Act 1989
- Each group will have a minimum of two adults and a gender balance will be maintained if possible
- Adults will not work alone with children
- We will seek to ensure meeting places are safe, secure and suitable for purpose
- We will be clear about boundaries with regard to touching always related to the child's needs and normally initiated by the child
- We will obtain parental/guardian permission for attendance at groups, trips, use of images and transporting children in private cars
- All those who drive children on church-organised activities should be over 25, have held a full driving licence for over two years and, if their license is endorsed with 6 points or more, should inform the incumbent or Parish Safeguarding Officer
- All cars that carry children should be comprehensively insured for both private and business use. The insured person should make sure that their insurance covers the giving of lifts relating to church-sponsored activities

13. UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

If children attend our church services without their parents' or carers' knowledge we will welcome the child(ren) and try to establish whether their parents are aware of where they are. We will make sure an adult recruited for work with children takes care of the child and try to discover when they are due home and encourage them to keep to that arrangement. Depending on the age and competence of the child, we will ring the parents or ask the young person to ring to gain the parents' consent to the child remaining. If the child comes regularly, we will endeavour to establish regular contact with the parents or carers.

14. VISITING ADULTS WHO MAY BE VULNERABLE, IN THEIR HOMES

(including **residential homes**)

Church workers will always complete an assessment of risk before visiting someone in their own home. They will always carry a mobile phone on a home visit, and ensure that someone knows where they are and when they are expected to return. They will always call by appointment and carry identification. Where our workers need to refer the person to another agency we will talk this through with the vulnerable adult, seeking his/her permission before passing on personal information. Our workers will always endeavour to be clear about what behaviour from the vulnerable adults is acceptable and what is not.

15. BELL RINGING

The PCC will appoint the tower captain and others who are likely to be in charge of ringing at any time. All Tower Captains and ringers are expected to abide by the Diocesan Guidance "Safeguarding Children and Young people who are Bell Ringers" which follows the Child Protection policy of the Central Council for Bell Ringers. In particular, no adults will work alone with children and young people, at least one adult should be in calling distance at all times and instruction should be given with minimum physical contact as set out in paragraph 6 of the Diocesan Policy.

16. ORGANISATIONS HIRING CHURCH BUILDING OR PREMISES

In relation to all activities and events which are not run directly by the church but which take place in church buildings or grounds the responsibility for implementing safeguarding policies rests with the hiring organisation and not with the PCC. However, the PCC needs to take reasonable steps to ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are being practised by the hiring organisation. The PCC will require visiting groups to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are protected at all times, follow safe recruitment procedures, and are aware of health and safety issues in the building. Visiting groups will be required to sign a hire agreement and abide by the Parish Safeguarding Policy.

17. SOCIAL MEDIA AND ENGAGING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Children and Young people's workers should be familiar with the full policy set out in the Safe Parish Guidance. All of the below should be shared with young people.

E mails on line chat and texting

- Parental agreement should be obtained before communicating with young people
- Language should be clear and unambiguous
- All conversations must be made available for viewing by a worker's supervisor
- Workers may provide advice and support, but avoid counselling

Mobile Phones

- Workers will be allocated a dedicated work phone
- They should use group texts wherever possible
- There should be an agreed length of time for conversations and a curfew e.g. no communication between 10.00pm and 7.00am
- Photos should only be taken in accordance with safeguarding guidance
- Images should only be downloaded to a church computer
- Conversations causing concern should be saved and passed to supervisor

18. WHISTLEBLOWING

To fulfil their commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, all organisations that provide services for, or work with, children or vulnerable adults are required to have appropriate whistle-blowing procedures, and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children to be addressed.

Members of a congregation should be encouraged to acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of unacceptable practice, performance or behaviour to the attention of the incumbent. It is often the case that a co-worker or co-voluntary worker may be the first to recognise that something is wrong but may not feel able to express concerns, feeling that this would be disloyal; he or she may fear harassment or victimisation. These feelings, however, natural, must never result in a child or adult who may be vulnerable continuing to be unnecessarily at risk.

How to raise a concern:

- Concerns, suspicions or uneasiness about practice or behaviour of an individual should be voiced as soon as possible to the Incumbent or Dean
- If the concern is about the Incumbent inform the Archdeacon and DSA
- If the concern is about the Dean inform the Bishop's Chaplain and DSA
- Be specific about what practice is concerning, what has been heard or what has been observed
- Ideally put concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, and providing dates and times
- People are encouraged to put your name to any disclosure; however, any concern raised anonymously should be considered at the discretion of the church, taking into account the seriousness of the issue raised, the credibility of the concern and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources

If you are concerned that someone you know is at risk of, or is being abused, or presents a risk to others please seek advice from a Safeguarding Adviser or if necessary report the matter to the Local Authority Social Care Services or the Police without delay