

St Mary's

W H E A T L E Y

Safeguarding Policy

This policy was adopted at the Parochial Church Council meeting in March 2019. It will be reviewed each year.

Introduction

The PCC has adopted “Promoting a Safer Church” (2017), the House of Bishops’ safeguarding policy statement, and will display it in a prominent place. The PCC expects all members of St Mary’s church with leadership responsibilities to follow the St Mary’s safeguarding policy, and will display it in a prominent place.

We are committed to pursuing high standards in caring for children and vulnerable adults. This document sets out general principles and guidelines for all those involved in working with them at St Mary’s. It is in line with the Church of England Safeguarding Children Policy “Protecting All God’s Children”, and also with the Diocese of Sheffield’s Safeguarding Policy, stated here:

As members of the Church of England we are concerned with the wholeness of each individual within God’s purpose for everyone. We seek to safeguard all members of the church community, of all ages. It is the responsibility of each one of us to protect children and young people from physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and from neglect.

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Part 1: Children and youth

Statement of aims in safeguarding

Our aims are:

- To offer young people opportunities to engage with, think and learn about the Christian faith in different contexts
- To encourage a strong Christian fellowship
- Help young people realise their full potential physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually
- To encourage young people to take a full part in the Church's life and worship
- To provide a safe meeting place for young people
- To encourage young people to become responsible adults
- To provide indoor and outdoor leisure activities for young people that are safe and risk assessed
- To uphold everyone's equality in the sight of God

This document covers the work of the parish with children and young people, in its services and in the groups meeting throughout the week.

Midweek groups

- Little Acorns toddler group (0-4 years, Thursdays, 9.15-11am)
- One-to-one Bible studies (Various ages, various days, various times)

Sunday groups

- 2 - 7 years, Sunday 10.45 - 11.30am
- 7 - 14 years, Sundays 10.45 - 11.30am

This policy also covers any work undertaken outside of the church buildings carried out under the auspices of the PCC.

Ratios

The Diocese guidelines of ratios of adult helpers to children will be followed at all times. On no account should an adult be by themselves with any age group.

Age group	Staff	Children
0-2 years	1 for every	3
2-3 years	1 for every	4
3-5 years	1 for every	8
5-8 years	1 for every	8
Over 8 years	1 for the first 8 children and then 1 for each additional	12

General Guidelines for Relating to Children

General attitude to children

We want to treat the children in our care with respect and dignity. Therefore we will want to:

- Avoid ridiculing, scapegoating or humiliating children
- Avoid showing favouritism to any particular children
- Be aware of speech, tone of voice and body language and the effect that it has on the children
- Treat each child as an individual and don't make unkind comparisons between children (whether peers or siblings)
- Work hard to encourage the children, highlighting their strengths and where appropriate giving them responsibilities

Physical contact

Physical contact is a normal part of many relationships. However we need to ensure that such contact is neither inappropriate nor misunderstood. Therefore we will want to:

- Keep everything public – avoid physical contact in any place or context that isn't open and in sight of others
- Remember that you will be stronger than most children
- Avoid engaging in rough games or behaviour or in any activity that puts the child at unnecessary risk of injury
- Avoid engaging in any activity or game that could be considered sexually provocative or stimulating
- Avoid touch which is inappropriate to the age of the child – touch should be related to the child or young person's needs, not the worker's. Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child or young person, rather than the worker
- Respect the child – allow them to decide how much physical contact to have with others and in most cases allow them to initiate
- All children and young people are entitled to personal privacy and the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others, except in circumstances such as a medical emergency
- Encourage each other to avoid behaviour that might be perceived to be inappropriate. This will usually mean raising our concerns with fellow leaders either on the spot (if urgent) or after the event. Where we have concerns that behaviour is inappropriate we may need to take further action – see below.
- When giving first aid (or applying sun cream etc), encourage the child or young person to do what they can themselves but, in their best interests giving appropriate help where necessary
- Team members should monitor one another in the area of physical contact. They should be free to help each other by constructively challenging anything which could be misunderstood or misconstrued
- Concerns about abuse should always be reported

Toileting

Only female volunteers are to take children to the toilet. The disabled toilet should always be the one used, and should be checked before the child goes in. Helpers should generally wait outside for the child.

Some of the children in our younger groups may ask for help when it comes to toileting – in these instances get parents from church. As a group leader it is not your responsibility to help the children use the toilet – that remains with their parents. If a parent has asked you to help their child, and you are comfortable doing so then that is acceptable, but do observe the guidelines above and remember that if you are uncomfortable helping a child use the toilet then you don't have to.

Discipline

From time to time, children will engage in unacceptable behaviour and, as responsible leaders, we must be ready to discipline them. Our fundamental principle is to discipline out of a love and concern for the individual and group rather than just anger or irritation on our part.

Dealing with unacceptable behaviour

- Act sooner rather than later – be observant and don't let situations get out of control
- Ensure that you understand the situation as fully as possible – give the children involved opportunity to explain
- Pinpoint the behaviour that you find unacceptable
- If appropriate, mention positive behaviour and encourage them to extend it
- Avoid raising past (and possibly unrelated) behaviour in general terms – e.g. 'What's wrong with you? You're always so selfish'
- Explain to the child the implications of their behaviour for other individuals and the group as a whole
- Ask them to respect other individuals and the group
- If they refuse, lay down clear and specific rules and explain what will happen if these rules are not kept
- Ensure that you carry out the action that you have indicated

- Judge your response accordingly and escalate your sanction if children continue to misbehave – for example:
 - General request to behave acceptably
 - Specific rules (e.g. ‘please don’t climb on the table’)
 - Separate child from others
 - Have the child sit in a particular place (e.g. in front of you or next to another leader)
 - Speak to their parents later
 - Send them out / take them to their parents now

After the event

- Reflect on why the child may be behaving in this way
- Reflect on whether there is something that can be changed in the structure of the group that would help remove the opportunity or temptation for unacceptable behaviour (e.g. are the children bored?)
- Discuss persistent unacceptable behaviour with other leaders and decide on a consistent course of action
- Reflect on whether you should you alert the child’s parents and ask their advice

General guidelines

- As leaders take a collective approach to discipline – don’t side with a child against another leader or allow children to play leaders off against each other
- If you have concerns about the approach taken by a leader do raise your concerns but don’t do it in front of the children – either take them aside there and then (if it is urgent) or speak to them afterwards
- Be wise in deciding whether to discipline a child in front of others or whether to take them to one side
- DO NOT use physical punishment (e.g. smacking)
- DO NOT shout, use a change in tone instead
- Stop abusive peer activities (e.g. ridiculing, bullying, name-calling) at the earliest opportunity and make it clear that they will not be tolerated

What to do if a child makes inappropriate advances or engages in inappropriate behaviour

- Tell the child that their language or behaviour is unacceptable, even if this is embarrassing for you or for them.
- Tell the group leader or Parish Safeguarding Officer of the incident, again, however embarrassing the incident might be.
- Agree with the group leader or Parish Safeguarding Officer what action should be taken to help the child and to minimise the chance of a recurrence.
- The group leader or Parish Safeguarding Officer should file a brief written record of the incident ideally within an hour (and within 24 hours at the absolute most).

Health & safety

We must be careful to ensure the safety of the children in our care.

- Ensure that you have access to a telephone and first aid kit in the place where you are meeting
- Take special care with children when:
 - crossing the road
 - ascending and descending stairs
 - where hot liquids are present (e.g. kitchen)
- Ensure that after the group has finished, the children are supervised until they are picked up by their parents or carers
- Ensure that you have an up to date copy of parents’ contact details
- Ensure that you are familiar with any specific medical requirements of the children in your care – these are detailed on the “Children’s and youth consent forms” in the “Sunday groups” box file in the lockable children’s work cupboard in the main hall.
- Do not allow children with infectious illnesses to attend the group
- Ensure that there is a route of escape in event of a fire
- Ensure basic hygiene in the preparation of food and drink

General Precautions for the Care of Children

We must take reasonable precautions to ensure the safety and comfort of the children who are entrusted to our care. Although the process can seem a little excessive it is designed for the benefit of all concerned and is not meant to be offensive.

Selection of leaders

All those who will be leading or helping with children's groups will be asked for a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. This must be specifically for children's work at St Mary's. While an application for a DBS check is being processed, a new helper may join in with a children's group but only if they are under the supervision of an experienced, DBS checked leader. All helpers and leaders must also undergo suitable diocesan safeguarding training.

Only once the Parish Safeguarding Officer is satisfied that suitable scrutiny has taken place will the individual be able to take up a position involving work with children. In addition, it will be our general practice not to have a single individual alone with a group of children for a prolonged period of time.

Examples of those who will need to satisfy the Parish Safeguarding Officer include:

- Leaders and helpers for Sunday children's groups
- Leaders and helpers for toddler group, including kitchen helpers

Parental and child information

Prior to a child being involved in a children's group, we will ask those responsible for the child to complete a "Children's and youth consent form". This form asks for information about the child (e.g. name, age, medical condition) and about the parent (e.g. contact information). The form also requests the parent's consent for their child's involvement.

Registers

We will keep accurate records of the attendance of children and adults.

Accident / near miss report forms

An accident is any unplanned event where someone is hurt, and a near miss is when someone could have been hurt if the circumstances had been slightly different. An accident/near miss form should be completed by the person involved, and returned to a staff member as soon as possible. It will be reviewed at the next staff meeting, and any necessary action will then be taken.

Forms can be found in the "accident/near miss forms" folder in the kitchen.

Maintaining records

Information collected as detailed above will need to be carefully stored for possible referral in the future. Information stored securely in a lockable filing cabinet in the church office includes:

- Completed volunteer checklist forms
- Completed registers
- Completed accident/near miss report forms
- Copies of completed "children's and youth consent forms"
- Screenshots of texts/social media messages sent to or from a young person

Information stored in the lockable children's work cupboard in the large church hall includes:

- Completed “children’s and youth consent forms” with emergency contact details
- Completed “parent and toddler group contact forms” with emergency contact details
- Registers currently in use
- A copy of this safeguarding policy

These records will be kept for appropriate periods in line with our data privacy notice.

Training

We want to be able offer children the best possible care. We are committed to improving the leadership we offer to them. Therefore we are committed to a continued pattern of training in teaching and looking after children (including the areas described in this document).

Photography

Images count as personal data under the 2018 General Data Protection Regulation. Therefore before photographs of any kind are taken within children’s groups the church requires consent in writing from a parent/guardian. If a photograph is taken by a group leader on their mobile phone for the purposes of a game or activity, this must be deleted immediately after use.

Phone & social media contact

If social media, email or text messaging is used to contact children then the following guidelines should be adhered to:

- **Social media:** Keep everything public and accessible to all users. Ensure that any social media is moderated and that there is appropriate access and password verification. If using Facebook, Twitter etc ensure that the page you are using is one used for professional work purposes and not a personal page. Before sending any messages please think how it could be interpreted by the recipient.
- **Text messaging:** Take extra care when using, ensuring that you save text messages as text files so that a record exists.

Leaders should not store contact details for young people on personal devices such as mobile phones. Leaders should not contact a young person directly unless the adult responsible for them has given permission for this to be done. A second leader should be copied into any messages sent to a young person. Screenshots of text/social media messages are to be taken and stored in the lockable filing cabinet.

1-to-1 arrangements

1-to-1 Bible studies are to be encouraged as a wonderful way of discipling young people, but leaders must be vigilant. The following guidance must be followed:

- Meetings must always take place in a public venue or with another leader present
- Young people must always feel comfortable with the leader and know they are freely able to leave.

Travel arrangements

Parents must be reminded that it is their responsibility to transport children to and from groups. Leaders must never be left alone with a young person, including car trips or walking them home (unless parental consent has been explicitly granted). Where groups are being transported, the driver must ensure that suitable car seats are provided, and parental consent has been obtained.

Abuse and Neglect

Sadly, abuse and neglect do occur. Without being paranoid we need to recognise this and to be alert to the possibility of abuse or neglect by either those within or without St Mary’s. An explanation of abuse and neglect

and some signs that might be associated with them are given in Part 3 of this policy. The following sections detail what action should be taken if abuse is alleged or suspected.

What to do if a child begins a conversation regarding inappropriate behaviour

The aim is to ensure that the child is given the opportunity to make the statement they want to make, as clearly and as fully as possible. This is **not** the time to investigate or to judge the matter. If possible try to have another adult present whilst the child speaks (perhaps by delaying the conversation). However, don't prevent the child from speaking if this is not a possibility or if it would unduly inhibit the child.

Things to do

- **Provide an environment in which the child can explain clearly and fully the nature of their complaint**
 - Give the child time to talk freely and without fear of being overheard
 - Give the child your full attention
 - Try to be sympathetic and to reassure the child that it is right to speak with you, e.g. 'Thank you for telling me'
 - Stay with the child until you feel they have said everything they want to say
- **Explain**
 - Explain to the child what you will do next in a way that they can understand and assure them that you will let them know what happens.
 - Find out whether they would be happy to speak to another adult about what they have said.
 - Try not to leave them in a distressed state.
- **Follow up the incident**
 - Write down as fully as possible the content of the conversation, using the child's actual words where possible. Include what you said and any observations of how the child appeared. Do this as soon as possible (ideally within an hour).
 - Speak as soon as possible to a 'responsible person' as explained in the next section
 - Don't speak to anyone else about the matter at this stage
 - If the child needs urgent medical attention, ensure that they receive it as soon as possible
 - Ensure that the child is kept informed of what is happening
 - Until further action is taken, where there is continued contact with the child, try to ensure that this is as normal possible. Only discuss the issue further if the child raises it.
- **Remember**
 - that the child may want the abuse to stop but still love the abuser
 - that the child may think that you are able to stop the abuse without anything else happening or that the child may have been bribed or threatened not to talk
- **Pray**

Things to avoid

- **Promising secrecy or confidentiality:** Gently explain that you will need to tell other responsible adults for the benefit of the child.
- **Investigating:** Be very careful not to put words into the child's mouth and don't press for information. Avoid asking questions except where it is absolutely necessary to clarify a point of detail.
- **Judging the situation:** Don't pass judgment on the child or the matter being presented. Rather just collect information. Even if they appear to you to have acted unwisely or to have broken a rule, at this stage avoid anything in your words or manner that is reproachful towards the child, e.g. 'Why didn't you tell me earlier?'
- **Embellishing details:** When making a disclosure to a Responsible Person (see below) try to recount only the facts the child confirmed to you, not what you suspect to be the case, this is important for the report to be accurate.
- **Panic or shock:** Try to retain your composure. Avoid appearing shocked or saying anything that might make the child feel more embarrassed about talking to you, e.g. 'I can't believe it!' 'Are you sure that this is true?'

Part 2: Vulnerable adults

Statement of Aims in Safeguarding

Our aims are:

- To offer people opportunities to engage with, think and learn about the Christian faith in different contexts
- To encourage a strong Christian fellowship
- Help all people realise their full potential physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually
- To encourage all people to take a full part in the Church's life and worship
- To provide a safe meeting place for all people
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Regular midweek groups

- Wednesday communion (10.30, weekly)
- Home groups (Various times throughout the week)
- Church prayer meeting (7.45-9pm – 1st Wednesday of each month)
- Community lunch (12.00-1.30pm – 1st Wednesday of each month)
- Visiting residential care homes (Various times on Thursdays, once a month)
- One-to-one Bible studies (Various times throughout the week)

Regular Sunday groups

- Morning Service (10.30 – 12.30am)

1. We recognize that everyone has different levels of vulnerability and that each of us may be regarded as vulnerable at some time in our lives.
2. As members of this parish we commit ourselves to respectful pastoral care for all adults to whom we minister.
3. We commit ourselves to the safeguarding of people who may be vulnerable, ensuring their well-being in the life of this church community.
4. We commit ourselves to promoting safe practice by those in positions of responsibility.
5. The parish commits itself to promoting the inclusion and empowerment of people who may be vulnerable.
6. It is the responsibility of each of us to prevent the physical, emotional, sexual, financial and spiritual abuse of vulnerable people, and to report any such abuse that we discover or suspect.
7. We undertake to exercise proper care in the appointment and selection of those who will work with people who may be vulnerable.
8. The parish is committed to supporting, resourcing, training and regularly reviewing those who undertake work amongst people who may be vulnerable.
9. The parish adopts the guidelines of the Church of England and the Diocese.
10. Each person who works with vulnerable people will agree to abide by these recommendations and the guidelines established by this church.

This church appoints our safeguarding officer to represent the concerns and views of vulnerable adults at our meetings and to outside bodies.

Part 3: Reporting, and recognising, abuse and neglect

What to do if you receive an allegation of, or suspect abuse of any kind

If you suspect, or any allegation is made to you (by a child or an adult), that some form of abuse has taken place (whether in the context of a St Mary's activity or elsewhere), please contact one of the 'responsible persons' listed below as soon as possible. In normal circumstances those nearer the top of the list should be approached first. However, if one or more of the individuals is implicated in the suspicion or allegation, please contact one of the other 'responsible persons'. If all are implicated, you will need to contact a responsible external agency (e.g. Diocese of Sheffield Safeguarding Adviser, social services).

- Parish Safeguarding Officer: **Craig Taylor**
- Deputy Parish Safeguarding Officer: **Rosemary Neill**
- Minister: **Andy Thomas**
- Church Warden: **Jeremy Johnson**

The action the 'responsible person' will take depends on the exact nature of the suspicion or allegation. In all cases they will:

- Ascertain from you the precise details of the allegation or suspicion
- Inform the other 'responsible persons' listed above
- Keep a written record of information collected and decisions made
- Contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser
- If the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser is unavailable, and it is deemed appropriate, call the police or social services

If, at any stage, you feel that the individual is in imminent danger, you should contact the police or social services immediately.

If you are not satisfied with the action that has been taken, then you retain a responsibility as a member of the public to report serious matters to the social services and should do so without hesitation.

What are abuse and neglect?

(a) Abuse

Abuse is causing harm to a person. People can also be at risk of abuse, which should also be taken seriously. Abuse can take a number of forms, which can commonly co-exist. They include the following:

- Emotional abuse:** Persistent emotional ill-treatment such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the person's emotional development. It may involve conveying to someone that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate. It may also involve frequently frightening them, making them feel in danger, or persistently rejecting or humiliating them.
- Physical abuse:** Causing physical harm to someone.
- Sexual abuse:** Unwilling involvement of someone in sexual activity or sexually inappropriate behaviour (including the production or use of pornographic material).
- Domestic abuse:** Domestic abuse is any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of their sex or sexuality.
- Spiritual abuse:** Within faith communities harm can be caused by the inappropriate use of religious belief or practice, including the misuse of leadership authority or discipline, oppressive teaching, obtrusive/ healing and deliverance ministries (including abuse linked to belief in spiritual possession) or rituals, any of which may result in people experiencing physical, emotional or sexual harm.

vi. **Group leaders should also be aware that other forms of abuse can occur:**

- Fabricated or induced illness
- Trafficking
- Forced marriage

(b) Neglect

Neglect involves a persistent failure to meet someone's basic needs. This includes failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing or appropriate medical care.

General observations

- Abuse may be spontaneous or organised. Organised abuse involves one person or more.
- Most cases of abuse or neglect involve those already known to the person rather than complete strangers.
- Adults with special needs are especially vulnerable to abuse

What signs are there of abuse?

Abuse and neglect can be difficult to spot. However, any of the following observations may be a sign of abuse or neglect. However, in many cases, there will be another explanation.

General indicators / indicators of emotional abuse

In general, **changes** in someone's behaviour or mood, either suddenly or over a period of time, may be significant. Such changes may be particularly important where someone becomes more **withdrawn** or more **aggressive**. Examples of such changes are listed below.

Mood

- Anxiety or depression
- 'Frozen watchfulness'
- Loss of ability to learn or concentrate
- Obsessions, phobias or fears
- Loss of self-esteem

Behaviour towards others

- Excessive attention seeking
- Running away or withdrawal
- Aggression
- Stealing or lying
- 'Clinginess'

Lifestyle

- Loss of appetite
- Eating disorders
- Self-harming
- Severe sleep disturbances and persistent tiredness

Indicators of physical abuse

- Reluctance to reveal parts of the body (e.g. remove a jumper when hot)
- Repeated tummy pains
- Marks of injury, especially injuries which:
 - have not received medical attention
 - are not consistent with the explanation provided.
 - occur to the body in places not usually exposed to falls and other accidents.
- Guide to injuries
 - Bruises, especially:
 - those in or around the mouth

- those of different colours (indicates injuries of different ages)
- those from fingertips, especially on arms, chest or face indicating tight gripping or shaking
- those from belt, implement, hand
- those around ear-lobes (also signs of tears)
- those to head or soft tissue areas of the body
- Bite-marks
- Burns and scalds, especially:
 - those with a clear outline – in particular circular (e.g. cigarette burn) or linear (e.g. from hot metal rod)
 - those of a uniform depth over a large area
 - those caused by friction (e.g. from being pulled across a carpet)
 - those surrounded by a clear water line (e.g. from immersion or pouring of hot water)
 - those surrounded by splash marks (e.g. where hot liquid has been thrown)
 - those that have caused scars (indicating previous burns)
- Fractures
- Cuts, scratches

Indicators of sexual abuse

- Inappropriate sexual behaviour towards adults or children
- Pre-occupation with sexual matters and requests for sexual advice
- Repeated urinary infections
- Allusions to unusual practices (e.g. unusual bed-sharing arrangements at home)

Indicators of neglect

- Under-nourishment
- Failure to grow
- Constant hunger
- Stealing food
- Untreated illness

The Rev'd Andy Thomas, Minister

Mr Jeremy Johnson, Church Warden

Date