

Woodbridge Group of Churches

Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

1 Introduction

In developing this policy, the Woodbridge Group of Churches commits to following the safeguarding policies of the Church of England and the Diocese of Bristol, and policy and guidance issued by the Diocese of Bristol. These churches commit to working within legislation and statutory guidance as related to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

This policy is derived from, and takes account of, the latest versions of the Safeguarding Policies of Bristol Diocese and the Church of England, and of relevant legislation and statutory guidance.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other Woodbridge policies (especially the Church Recruitment by PCCs – policy and procedures) and role descriptions, especially in relation to Section 4.

2 Definitions

Child For the purposes of this policy, a child is anyone under the age of 18 years.

Vulnerable Adult Everyone has different levels of vulnerability and each of us may be regarded as vulnerable at some time in our lives.

For the purposes of this policy, a vulnerable adult is someone who:

- has needs for care and support, or
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse.

Safeguarding This term means protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights, enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

Abuse This is a very broad term and includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, domestic abuse, financial abuse, neglect, self-neglect, discriminatory abuse and spiritual abuse. This list is not exhaustive. A more comprehensive list of types of abuse, actions associated with those types of abuse, and signs and symptoms can be found at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/Type%20of%20Abuse%20Reference%20Document%20September%202018%20-%20PROOF%20COPY.pdf>

A copy is also available on the Woodbridge Group of Churches website at:

<https://www.woodbridgegroup.co.uk/safeguarding/>.

3 Key principles

The Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) within the Woodbridge Group take seriously their responsibility to safeguard and to protect the welfare of all people with whom ministers and the members of the church come into contact.

Members of all the churches in the Woodbridge Group are committed to following legislation, guidance and good practice in order to:

- care for, nurture and minister to all people with whom church members come into contact and especially the vulnerable;
- establish safe, caring communities which provide a culture of 'informed vigilance' as to the dangers of abuse; and
- enable those who disclose abuse to be listened to and taken seriously.

In order to do this, PCCs will:

- carefully select, train and support all those with any responsibility within the church, in line with safer recruitment principles, including the use of Disclosure and Barring Service disclosures;
- respond without delay to every concern raised which suggests that someone may have been harmed, co-operating with the police and local authority in any investigation;
- seek to work with anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry of informed pastoral care;
- challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust; and
- 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 or vulnerable adult.

4 Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 The PCC will:

- have overall responsibility for safeguarding issues;
- appoint a Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) for a period of one year, renewable annually at the APCM;
- ensure that policies and procedures are in place to cover safeguarding, and that these are at all times available in a public place (normally inside the church, clearly labelled) and on the Woodbridge Group of Churches website at: <https://www.woodbridgegroup.co.uk/safeguarding/>.
- ensure that recruitment is carried out in accordance with Church Recruitment by PCCs - policy and procedures;
- ensure that the name and contact details of the local PSO and other key contacts are displayed in a public place, and that it is clear that any concerns can be referred to them;
- identify, eliminate and manage any safeguarding risks to individuals in any of its activities; and
- in the event of notification of abuse, refer the matter to the PSO, or if unavailable, to the police and/or Social Services.

4.2 PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICERS will:

- support PCCs in ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are regularly reviewed, adopted and followed within the group;
- keep abreast of legislative and other developments in safeguarding issues, and undertake such training as is necessary for the performance of the role;
- keep in a safe and secure place a confidential record of safeguarding issues and incidents which arise;
- in the event of notification of abuse, work with PCCs and the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor to refer the matter to the police and/or Social Services;
- ensure, so far as is possible, that anyone involved in working with, or ministering to, children or vulnerable adults is commissioned by the PCC so that clear lines of accountability are maintained.

4.3 Responsibilities of the INCUMBENT

- To act as a point of contact should there be any safeguarding allegation or concern regarding a PSO.

4.4 Responsibilities of CHURCHWARDENS

- To ensure that in the period of a vacancy, the incumbent's safeguarding roles and responsibilities are fulfilled, in consultation with the PCC, PSO and the Area Dean.
- To pay attention to the specific needs of children and vulnerable adults when undertaking health and safety inspections and risk assessment.
- To ensure that risk assessments are carried out for every activity overseen by the PCC and before new activities are undertaken.
- To ensure that all parish activities with children and vulnerable adults are adequately supervised and insured.
- To ensure that the parish has procedures for responding to complaints and grievances.
- To answer questions regarding safeguarding as they arise in the archdeacon's visitations, and respond to any specific safeguarding advice which may be given by the archdeacon.
- To take part in the allegations management procedure if and when required.
- To take part in an agreement in the context of ministering to those that may present a risk.

4.5 Responsibilities of ACTIVITY LEADERS

- To follow, and to ensure that activities are run according to the safeguarding policy and associated good practice guidance, taking account of any risk assessments undertaken.
- To report any safeguarding concerns as outlined in the policy.
- To ensure that all volunteers have been safely recruited, have undertaken induction and other suitable training, and have a DBS check as required.
- To supervise agreed volunteers.

4.6 Responsibilities of STAFF and VOLUNTEERS

- To follow the safeguarding policy and associated good practice guidance.
- To report any safeguarding concern as outlined in the policy.

4.7 Responsibilities of CHURCH MEMBERS

- To be aware of the safeguarding and associated policies, and to know where they can be found.
- To report any concerns as outlined in the policy.

5 Procedures for the management of allegations and concerns

5.1 If concerns are raised ...

- Any concerns or signs of abuse must be reported to the Parish Safeguarding Officer appointed by the PCC. If the situation is urgent (ie there is an imminent risk of harm), contact must be made with the police (on 101 or 999), or the Local Authority Children or Adults Safeguarding Teams and the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor.
- The PCC will work with police, local authority and other partners in any investigation, including where allegations are made against a member of the church community.
- If an allegation is made against a person in a position of trust (minister, PCC member, staff member, volunteer), the Diocese of Bristol's "Allegations Management Procedure" will be followed. The Allegations Management Procedure can be found at:
<https://d3hgrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/5f3ecfb22c3ee/content/pages/documents/63f867984a2096dde307eac2e2187b1959740568.pdf>.

5.2 If abuse has occurred ...

- The PCC will ensure that pastoral care and support is offered to any child or adult who has suffered abuse.
- Where cases are referred to the police, criminal or civil courts, the PCC will co-operate in full with the appropriate authorities.
- The PCC will provide supervision for any member of the church community known to pose a risk of harm to others.
- The PCC will provide support and pastoral care for any member of the church community against whom an allegation has been made.
- Where it is found that a member of the church has been wrongfully accused and has been exonerated, the PCC will ensure that every support is provided to the individual to enable them to resume their church life.

5.3 Confidentiality

Children The PCC recognises that it may not be possible to keep information confidential.
Adults The PCC will seek consent from an adult before information is shared about them.

5.4 Record keeping

Records of all safeguarding concerns and actions are kept by the Parish Safeguarding Officers.

Adopted by PCC at a meeting of the PCC held on (date)

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(signed)

Prepared by current PSOs March 2022, and reviewed annually. Last reviewed March 2023, minor revisions only

RESPONDING TO A SAFEGUARDING CONCERN OR ALLEGATION

