

A Safe Church Policy

As a church community, we are committed to:

- The care, nurture of and respectful pastoral ministry with all children and adults
- The safeguarding and protection of all children and adults
- The establishment of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment, where there is a culture of 'Informed vigilance' regarding the dangers of abuse, which:

For children and young people

- values them for who they are, and nurtures their positive development
- enables them to participate fully and contribute to their church community
- protects them from actual or potential harm

For adults who may be vulnerable, including those suffering domestic abuse

- ensures that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse
- encourages those who may be vulnerable
 - to lead as independent a life as possible,
 - to choose how to lead their life, and
 - to be active contributors to the church community
- protects those who may be vulnerable from actual or potential harm

For all people

- enables and encourages concerns to be raised and responded to openly and consistently
- offers support and care for those suffering, or who have suffered, from any form of abuse
- promotes respect, and the value of each person as a child of God

We are therefore committed to best practice according to the national policies and guidelines of the Church of England, in the protection of children and vulnerable people; in the recruitment, training and supervision of all who exercise a pastoral ministry; and in responding to any allegations or complaints. This policy is reviewed each year by the Parochial Church Council and re-affirmed at the Annual Meeting.

(Incumbent)

(Churchwarden)

(Churchwarden)

(Date)

Because we understand that:

- God has a special care for those who struggle
- All of us at different periods of our lives are vulnerable and in need of help
- We can make a difference

The Diocese of Manchester: A Safe Church Policy

Why?

God has a concern for the vulnerable and the struggling. In Exodus 3, God says, "I have heard their cry .. I will deliver". In Isaiah God promises to bind up the broken-hearted, to comfort those who mourn, and these verses are picked up by Jesus in Luke 4 as part of his "manifesto".

Likewise, the Sermon on the Mount says it is the poor and marginal who are blessed (Matthew 4, cf Luke 6), and the final teaching in Matthew's gospel is to feed the hungry, tend the sick, and care for those in prison. Jesus in his own ministry accepted and healed the sick in body, mind and spirit, and commanded a special place for children.

Not that all people are not important, just that the needy and those who otherwise would miss out are given particular concern; and as God's church, his body here on earth, we are called both to offer that same welcome to the needy, and to model that same love in and through our lives. A church community should be one where these concerns are paramount, and one which protects people as far as possible from any further suffering.

We are called to protect and keep safe, as salt preserves, and to shine light where otherwise it is most dark. We are called to be "aroma of Christ", as we look forward to that time in the new Kingdom when there will be no more suffering or pain or tears or death.

And in order to live this out we are called to be obedient to God and to use our God-given wisdom, responding well when there is a problem (as when some widows were being left out in Acts 6), and being well-trained / resourced and equipped, with the right attitude that as under-shepherds of a flock we can protect the weak from danger and dangers.

What?

- **Procedures** and Guidelines, which ensure people running events or activities know what they are doing and supposed to be doing, and can respond properly if there is a problem.
- **People** who are chosen / recruited with care and wisdom, trained properly and supported and supervised in their ministry so they are "safe" people in their contacts
- **Practice** where activities and events are managed and run properly and safely
- **Safe Place / Premises** where the building has been assessed and reviewed for its suitability and safety
- **Positive** so that we can challenge neglect and abuse, responding appropriately and clearly

The Policy is to be visible and made real, so that the church and its ministries will be known to be "good", affirming and safe, valued and valuing.

There is a core commitment to ensure the safety of those who come to the church, the young, the frail, and any already wounded or at risk.

There is a duty to respond to allegations of abuse or neglect in the proper and required way.

There is a Christian duty of care also to those who, having offended or damaged others, are seeking rehabilitation and recovery; and this must be handled with such wisdom that it does not put others at risk.

The Bishop also has a responsibility to ensure that his ministers, lay or ordained, are not putting themselves or others in positions of risk, and are supported and resourced.

There are very clear legal understandings of a "child" and the responsibilities of organisations if they are working with children. Anyone under the age of 18 is a child. Defining vulnerability is a much more complex and shaded issue. In brief, vulnerability can affect us all, and in different ways, and there are some people who, for emotional, physical or mental reasons, are – at least for a period – significantly more vulnerable.

Just as abuse is defined across different categories, physical, emotional, sexual, financial / legal, and very importantly neglect or denial of rights, so vulnerability has to be understood across this whole spectrum, and the church and its ministers must be alert to this.

Some have been ritually or spiritually abused, or this has been a component of the abuse they have suffered; this requires particular sensitivity if faith is to become a healing gift not an ongoing part of the suffering. Different people, not least in different cultural settings, may internalise and / or express their suffering in different ways, and the wise minister is alert to such cultural or sub-cultural differences.

What does “A Safe Church” look like on the ground?

A ‘Safe Church’ will include the following general four areas, properly assessed and managed.

It will also include appropriate awareness of particular issues because of the nature of the work, and the context.

People

- Should be recruited only after references have been taken up and suitability ascertained;
- Should work in teams, with support and supervision;
- Should have a clear “job description” or role so they and others know what it is they are doing.

Place

- It is the responsibility of the church to have done a risk assessment and ensured the premises are suitable and safe;
- Insurance and safety certificates must be in place (fire, electrics, etc.);
- Review of the suitability of the building for the purposes used should take place annually.

Practice

- Risk assessment for activities;
- Proper number of leaders and helpers, with proper training;
- Clear sense of what the work / task requires from all involved;
- Regular meetings to review what is happening, how things are done and to update on training, not least in response to potential emergencies;
- Good record keeping of attendance and incidents;
- Good communication.

Procedures

- Written good practice guidelines;
- Regular review of policies;
- Clear understanding of confidentiality and professional behaviour.

All working with children or vulnerable adults must know what to do in case of allegations of, or suspicions of abuse or neglect of whatever kind.

It is the responsibility of the whole church to work together to ensure it is a “safe place”.

Affirmation and Requirements

We affirm that all people have the right:

- To live in a safe secure, stable and loving environment
- To be protected from all forms of harm, including neglect, abuse and exploitation
- To have a voice, and to be heard
- To be valued and respected, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age or other distinction
- To be treated as an individual with particular needs and particular gifts.

Clergy, staff and volunteers from the churches are required to:

- Undergo all training required of their role, not least in the areas of Safeguarding
- Know and work by the diocesan policies and guidelines in their area of work
- Ensure that their actions do not constitute abuse or misconduct of any kind, nor put themselves at unnecessary risk of allegations of misconduct
- Respond promptly to allegations received of abuse or misconduct, contacting the relevant authorities

Parishes are required to

- Adopt, work by and review these policies, updating them as instructed
- Report annually on their compliance and any issues
- Be pro-active in working to make the church building and other buildings as accessible as possible and safe for all users
- Recruit according to the Guidelines
- Ensure proper supervision, training and accountability for all working with children and / or vulnerable adults not least on what to do in the case of allegations of abuse or suspected abuse
- Ensure other organisations using their premises have similar policies or will agree to work within the diocesan policies.

The Diocese will

- Ensure that required or appropriate training is available for clergy, staff and volunteers who need it
- Ensure that proper recruitment practices are in place in parishes that would deter any who are actively seeking to exploit or abuse vulnerable people
- Provide expertise and / or links to expertise for when parishes have problems, concerns or difficulties in these areas
- Work to promote a common culture across the diocese in which the well-being of all, the protection of the vulnerable, and good practices which make for safe community are core
- Ensure proper confidentiality and information sharing related to the protection of adults, including those who may be vulnerable and the perpetrators of abuse, in a multi-agency context are maintained through agreed protocols
- Ensure that diocesan Safe-guarding Policies are in line with current Church of England policies, and kept up to date / revised in line with changes or developments in these policies.

Allegations of abuse and suspected abuse **MUST** be reported to the proper authorities for investigation.

This policy is reviewed each year by the Parochial Church Council and re-affirmed at the Annual Meeting. In all our work we adhere to National Policies on Safeguarding Children, and for Vulnerable Adults, and in particular the Diocesan 'Safeguarding Children' Policy as revised most recently, and the full "Safe Church " Policy, copies of which are available on the diocesan website www.manchester.anglican.org. Version 1.00 June 2012