



St Mary & St George Church, High Wycombe

Safeguarding Policy

As a church we are committed to ensuring that everyone is safe and feels safe. Our Safeguarding Policy has been approved by the PCC and provides an important resource for clergy, wardens, PCC members, leaders and volunteers. It helps us to be clear about our obligations and responsibilities and demonstrates our commitment to take safeguarding very seriously.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Useful Contacts

Parish Safeguarding Officer: Rhiannon Stokes

Deputy Safeguarding Officer: Caroline Bird
safeguarding@smgchurch.co.uk

Diocesan Safeguarding Team: 01865 208290
safeguarding@oxford.anglican.org

Vicar: Revd. Jonny Dade
jonny.dade@smgchurch.co.uk

Church Wardens: Paul Butcher & Rick Webley

Church Office: 07902 928529
hello@smgchurch.co.uk

Church Website: smgchurch.co.uk/saferchurch

Unless otherwise specified, 'Church Worker' may refer to anyone in a position of leadership or responsibility within St Mary & St George, whether employed or voluntary.



Summary As the PCC of St Mary & St George Church, on behalf of all church members, leaders, workers and volunteers:

1. We are committed to:
 - The care, nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children and all adults
 - The safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable
 - The establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is a culture of 'informed vigilance' as to the dangers of abuse.

2. We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility within the Church, in line with safer recruitment principles, including the use of Disclosure and Barring Service criminal records checks where volunteers or staff are working with children and/or vulnerable adults.

In regards to recruiting ex-offenders we will assess applicant's suitability for positions in line with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order using criminal records checks which are processed through the Disclosure and Barring Service. We will only ask applicants to provide details of convictions and cautions that we are legally allowed to know about. We will select candidates for roles based on their skills, qualifications and experience and actively promote equal opportunity for all. Any matter revealed on a DBS certificate will be discussed with the individual concerned by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team before deciding to withdraw any role offer.

3. We will respond without delay to every complaint made which suggests that an adult, child or young person may have been harmed, working with the DSO and appropriate statutory bodies.

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

5. We will seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust. Where the Vicar is implicated in any allegation, the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer along with the Team Rector shall be immediately informed.

6. We will seek to 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, young person or vulnerable adult.

7. In all these principles we will follow statute, guidance and recognised good practice.

8. We use APCS (Access Personal Checking Services Ltd) as the Registered Body to process applications for Disclosure and Barring Service criminal records checks. We will keep the Diocese informed of the body we use. The Church Manager is the DBS Administrator and oversees this.

9. We will advise the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser if we receive a Disclosure which is 'blemished' or 'positive'.

10. We will review this policy annually, check that our policies are up to date, and supply a copy of the updated policy statement to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

11. Safer recruitment and the recruitment of ex-offenders

Revd. Jonny Dade (Vicar)

Rhiannon Stokes (Parish Safeguarding Officer)

Caroline Bird (Deputy Safeguarding Officer)

Mr Rick Webley (Church Warden)

Mr Paul Butcher (Church Warden)

Defining Terms:

- Children and young people are interchangeable terms used to describe anyone under the age of 18
- We define 'vulnerable adult' in line with the Church of England's description of 'any adult aged 18 or over who, by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation is permanently or for the time being unable to take care of him or herself, or to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation'

Responding to a child or adult who may be disclosing abuse.

We will endeavour to:

- Listen carefully and take the child or vulnerable adult seriously
- Make an accurate record as soon as possible
- Reassure the child or vulnerable adult that they have acted correctly in disclosing the information

We will not:

- Promise confidentiality
- Investigate or ask leading questions

- Where a disclosure is made to a volunteer or other church member, they should seek to notify both the Parish Safeguarding Officer and the Vicar as soon as possible.
- If the allegation pertains to the Safeguarding Officer, the person must inform the Vicar, who, in turn, will notify the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.
- If the allegation pertains to the Vicar, the person must inform the Parish Safeguarding Officer who, in turn, will notify the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and the Church Wardens.
- Disclosures pertaining to either the Vicar or the Parish Safeguarding Officer must not be referred to the implicated party. The matter will be handled by the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer and, where necessary, the Archdeacon.
- If we encounter a child or vulnerable adult in a situation where they are in immediate danger, we will act immediately to secure the safety of the child or adult. This may involve contacting the Police or other Emergency Services or Social Services. The Parish Safeguarding Adviser and the Vicar should also be informed at the earliest opportunity.
- If we encounter a child or vulnerable adult at risk we shall contact the Parish Safeguarding Officer and the Vicar. If an immediate response is required and neither are contactable, the Church Wardens should be contacted, who should then seek advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

Safer Recruitment

- All church workers – paid or voluntary – working with children and vulnerable adults will not be permitted to work until they have received DBS clearance.
- In addition they will have to be given a Role Description and sign a Declaration indicating their willingness to operate within the PCCs Safeguarding Policy.
- Those in lead-roles working with children and vulnerable adults will be required to undertake Safeguarding training.

Partnerships

SMG will ensure that partnerships will only be entered into with parties able to demonstrate active attention to safeguarding through up to date policies and procedures. For long term partners this will be as part of the annual Safeguarding review. Furthermore SMG will only promote and donate to organisations able to demonstrate the same attention to safeguarding. Checking for this will commence with interrogation of the other party's website followed up with direct enquiry. Where doubt arises action will be taken in line with current regulatory guidelines.

Those who pose a Risk

When it is known that a member of the congregation, or someone wishing to join the congregation, has a history of perpetrating any form of abuse (such as sexual, physical, emotional or financial) and so may pose a risk, we will consult with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser 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.

Safer Practice with children

- The ratio of leaders to children will comply with the Children Act 1989
- Adults will not work alone with children
- We will seek to ensure meeting places are safe, secure and suitable for purpose
- We will obtain parental/guardian permission for attendance at groups, trips, use of images and transporting children in private cars
- Children with diagnosed specialist needs or disabilities will have a protocol agreed with their carers when they take part in activities with SMG in order to adequately safeguard them and meet their specialist needs.

Social Media and Communication

- Employees of the PCC, Church Wardens and Clergy should not be 'friends' on Facebook or 'followers' on Instagram or other similar social media platforms with children under the age of 18 years of age, unless they have set up a separate 'work' account, which must also be accessible to the Parish Safeguarding Officer.
- Church Workers (including volunteers) with responsibilities for delivery children's ministry, should not be 'friends' or 'followers' on social media platforms with children or young people within the church community to whom they have any form of pastoral responsibility. Exceptions may be made in the case of relatives and in the case of personal family friends, only with the written consent of the parents/legal guardians.
- Where possible, Church Workers should be encouraged to use group forums (ie. WhatsApp or Messenger) or to organise events in Facebook Groups or Events where there is greater transparency. All official church Facebook Groups and Pages should include the Parish Safeguarding Officer as a member.
- Church Workers (voluntary or employed) may communicate with children and young people by email, text or telephone with the express permission from the parent or legal guardian of said child/young person.
- Church Workers should limit such communication with children and young people to appropriate and relevant topics of conversation and should restrict text and online-chat conversations to the hours of 7am-10pm.
- Photos of children and young people should not be shared on public platforms without the written consent of parents and/or legal guardians
- Photos shared between Church Workers and children/young people should be appropriate and in accordance with safeguarding guidance. Suggestive, ambiguous or sexual language or imagery shared between adults and children/young people will not be tolerated.
- Church Workers should not delete online or text conversations with children/young people but maintain them as a permanent record. They must consent to these conversations being viewed by the Parish Safeguarding Officer at any time.
- When using social media platforms, Clergy, Church Wardens and all paid employees of the PCC must be mindful of their conduct and seek to act in a responsible manner that is consistent with the values of St Mary & St George Church.
- Volunteer Church Workers (including lay leaders, children's workers and others) are not employees of the church, but are nevertheless representatives and ambassadors and so should conduct themselves online in a manner befitting of a committed Christian and in keeping with the values of the church. Failure to do so, may result them being asked to relinquish their role.

APPENDIX: Safeguarding Procedure

In the event of a safeguarding concern or a disclosure being made, the Parish Safeguarding Officer must be notified at the earliest opportunity. They may, in turn, need to notify the Vicar and/or Church Wardens.

Written records of disclosures should be kept – recording the facts, with accurate dates and times. Case files are stored securely, with access restricted to the Parish Safeguarding Officer and the Vicar.

Where the Parish Safeguarding Officer cannot be reached, then the Vicar and/or Church Wardens should be notified – unless the concern relates to them. If an allegation is made against the Vicar or Church Wardens then both the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and the Bishop (via the Archdeacon) should be notified

If there is a concern that a child or vulnerable adult is in imminent danger, then the respondent should call the Police on 999 without delay.

If there is a concern that a child or vulnerable adult is being abused, then the relevant Buckinghamshire Council safeguarding team should be notified.

The Parish Safeguarding Officer, Vicar or Church Wardens may refer the matter to the Diocese Safeguarding Team or seek their advice – and should do so where the matter has been referred to the Police or other external agencies.

Where an allegation is made against a congregation member, they should be notified that they must not have unsupervised contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults. This notification will come from the Vicar and Parish Safeguarding Officer, with support from the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor.

In some instances, a ‘worship agreement’ may need to be drawn up which sets out the terms under which the accused may attend worship services. The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor and the Police will be involved in this process.

Updated Policy approved by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) on 20th March 2025

Signed 

Revd. Jonny Dade, Vicar

On behalf of the Safeguarding Officer, Church Wardens and PCC