

Responding to Safeguarding Allegations: Parish Policy and Guidance

- All Saints Lindfield recognises that in all matters that involve allegations that someone has, or may have, caused harm to another person, whether child or adult, the welfare of the alleged victim is paramount and is our primary concern. No other consideration, however legitimate or important, can outweigh this primary responsibility.
- We recognise that all allegations that someone may have harmed a child or adult must be taken seriously. In all but the most exceptional circumstances, this will mean letting a safeguarding specialist know about the allegation.
- We recognise that it is not our responsibility to investigate allegations, nor would it be appropriate for us to do so. Our responsibility is to pass allegations on to the person/people who can respond appropriately.
- In the first instance, this will normally involve informing the incumbent and the parish safeguarding officer (unless the allegation is about them).
- We will inform the Diocesan Safeguarding Team upon becoming aware of any allegation that someone in our church community has harmed, or may have harmed, a child or adult (this will normally be done by the incumbent and/or the parish safeguarding officer)
- We recognise that any allegation that a person in a position of responsibility for children (paid or voluntary) has behaved in such a way that indicates they may present a risk to children, will be referred by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). If the alleged behaviour is of a criminal nature, the police will always be involved.
- We recognise that any allegation that a person in a position of responsibility for adults (paid or voluntary) has behaved in such a way that indicates they may present a risk to adults, will be referred by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team to the local Adult Services team manager. If the alleged behaviour is of a criminal nature, the police will always be involved. (The issues of consent are more complex with harm to adults; this will be discussed with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team in individual cases.)
- We recognise that human behaviour is complex and many-layered, and that any individual may have motives or intentions that are not apparent, even to those who believe they know them well. Practically speaking, this means that we will commit to ensuring that any allegation that a person has harmed, or may have harmed, a child or adult will be taken seriously as per the above points, even when that person is a highly respected individual whose integrity appears to be without question.
- We recognise that the best way to identify any false or malicious allegation is to treat all allegations the same. A transparent, fair and accountable process that is consistently applied is best for all involved, including those against whom allegations are made.
- We recognise that all involved in situations where allegations are made require pastoral support. In particular, the person making the allegation and their family, and the person against whom the allegation is made and their family, will require skilled and careful pastoral support. Providing that support may be complex, and we recognise and commit to working with the wider Diocese should this situation arise.

- We commit to implementing the advice received or any outcome arising from the above process.

Revised: January 2018 | Adopted by PCC: 19 February 2018

Expressing Concerns and 'Whistleblowing': Policy and Guidance

Introduction

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility; given this, encouraging people to express concerns appropriately and in a timely fashion is an important aspect of a strong safeguarding culture. Additionally, 'whistleblowing' has been recognised as having an important place in developing a strong safeguarding culture within organisations. At the most simple level, anyone can spot a genuine concern and it is important that everyone who does so feels safe to raise that concern. At a more fundamental level, organisations – including the church – can become hierarchical and opaque, and a strong whistleblowing policy recognises the importance of empowering those who may not hold positions of structural influence within the organisation to feel confident enough to speak out, should they believe poor practice to be present.

The aim of this policy and associated guidance is to provide a clear and transparent way for anyone involved in All Saints, Lindfield to raise genuine concerns regarding poor practice that impacts upon the safety or wellbeing of children or adults to whom we minister. It also aims to ensure that any concerns are dealt with effectively and in a timely fashion.

This policy and guidance provides a simple set of steps to deal with concerns, ensuring that people are not penalised for raising genuine concerns, even if those concerns appear to be unfounded.

This policy and guidance applies to everyone involved in All Saints, Lindfield, including all workers who are involved on either a paid or voluntary basis. **Like all parish safeguarding policies, this policy should be easily available for all – for instance at the back of church and on the church website. It should not be necessary for someone who wants to see this policy to ask a leader within the church to provide it.**

Our Commitment:

- We recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility;
- We recognise that no other concern or responsibility, however genuine, outweighs the need to prioritise the welfare of children and adults at all times;
- We welcome, encourage and urge anyone who is concerned about any aspect of our safeguarding practice or provision to raise those concerns, as outlined in the Guidance below;
- We welcome, encourage and urge anyone who is concerned about the safety and welfare of a child or adult to report those concerns as outlined in the Guidance below, and in accordance with the Guidance found in the section of the Diocesan Safeguarding Website, entitled 'What Do I Do If?';
- We undertake to treat all such concerns seriously, as outlined in the Guidance below;
- We guarantee that no-one who raises any concern in good faith, even if those concerns are ultimately deemed to be unfounded, will face any adverse consequences whatsoever.

Guidance:

What to do if you have a concern:

- In the first instance, speak to the leader of the area of church about which you have a concern (for instance, if your concern is about the Good News Club, speak to the Children and Families Pastor). A good principle is that concerns should be dealt with at the lowest level necessary and only escalated beyond that if those concerns remain, having been expressed. However, if your concern is about the behaviour of a leader in the church (lay or ordained), you may feel that you need to escalate it to someone in authority over them; you would be perfectly justified in doing this.
- Try to be as specific as possible: what or whom are you concerned about exactly? Can you give specific dates or examples of what has caused your concern? Vague concerns are difficult to investigate. If you only have an impression, or cannot give specific examples, you may still wish to express concerns but be open about the limited details you have.
- Try to avoid language that is either accusatory or emotive: your aim is to improve an area of church life, not to put the recipient of your concern on the defensive.
- It is very helpful to refer to a policy, if you can (although if you cannot, this is not a reason to avoid expressing your concern). This helps the person receiving your concern to see very quickly that you are simply holding the church to account to its own policies or to Diocesan policies.
- Face-to-face is usually best, but follow up the conversation in writing. "Last Sunday after church I expressed a concern about X, you replied by saying Y, and you said you would get back to me by Z. Please could you reply by confirming that my understanding of our conversation is correct": a simple written communication such as this can assist greatly in providing clarification to all concerned about what was said (although see below guidance for the person receiving the concern along similar lines).
- If you are satisfied that your concern has been resolved, you can leave the matter there. If you are not satisfied, it is important that you escalate it. We suggest that a suitable 'order of escalation' would be:
 1. **Lay Leader in Church (e.g. Children's or Youth Pastors)**
 2. **Incumbent (and/or churchwarden in a vacancy)**
 3. **Diocesan Safeguarding Team**
 4. **Bishop**
 5. **National Safeguarding Team**
- In escalating your concern, you are acting in an entirely appropriate way. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility; there may be the rare occasion where you just have to raise your concern outside of your local parish context, in order to ensure that the children and adults your church ministers to are safe.
- If you feel that the concern has great urgency and cannot be escalated in this manner (for instance if you are concerned about the safety or welfare of a child or adult), then you must raise those concerns without delay with the appropriate statutory authority. Please follow the guidance on the Diocesan Safeguarding Website, under the section entitled 'What Do I Do If?'. Use the appropriate sub-heading to find out how best to report these concerns.

What to do if you receive a concern:

- If someone tells you that they have a concern you should arrange to meet him/her as soon as possible.
- Approach the situation sensitively, recognising the discomfort that the person may feel. Offer to meet him/her away from the church if they wish and allow them to bring a friend if that would help.
- Do not promise confidentiality: you do not know what they are going to share, but if they share an immediate safeguarding concern you will have no choice other than to break that promise.
- However, be prepared to discuss the possibility of anonymity for the person sharing the concern. People may have reasons to want to stay anonymous, even if they know they have to say something, and closing this option off may mean that the concern never gets aired.
- Reassure the person that there will be no negative repercussions for any concern shared in good faith – even if it turns out to be unfounded or mistaken. ‘Concerns’ shared out of malice or divisiveness are a different matter but at this stage, assume the person to be acting in good faith.
- You may wish to suggest sources of support for the person – especially if they are on their own without the support of a friend or family member. Sharing concerns in an institutional context can be very intimidating – even in church – and the concern may have been a source of great anxiety for a long time. The person may be sharing the concern with you because this anxiety has reached the point where they feel compelled to act, and in coming to you they are expressing a great measure of faith that they will be well-received, and not have their intentions misinterpreted. They may wish to speak to someone outside the immediate context to receive some pastoral support (for instance from a neighbouring parish), or they may wish to speak to someone in the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.
- Recognise that not everyone expresses genuine concerns appropriately. Someone can say something in the wrong manner, at the wrong time and with the wrong language – but still be right. Don’t be too quick to dismiss what someone says because of how they say it.
- Make notes of the conversation, ideally at the time or immediately afterwards.
- Follow-up your conversation in writing as soon as you can. “On date X, you expressed your concerns about Y. I replied by saying I would look into what you said, and would get back to you by date Z’. This helps provide clarity for all involved.
- Make sure you are clear about what you will do with the concern, by when you will do it, and when you will let the person know. Give the person a clear indication of when they can expect to hear back from you, and keep to this promise if you have made no progress – hearing from you with no news is better than not hearing from you at all.
- Unless the concern is easily resolved, we suggest that you seek advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. If the concern is about the behaviour of an adult in the church, you must follow the policy ‘Managing Allegations in the Church’. If the concern is about the safety and welfare of a child or adult, you must follow the guidance provided in the ‘What Do I Do If?’ section of the Diocesan Safeguarding Website.

The crucial principle for any adequate Whistleblowing policy is that anyone raising any concern in good faith – whether or not that concern is ultimately justified – should suffer no adverse consequences whatsoever.

Parish E-Safety Policy

This policy should be read alongside the Parish of All Saints, Lindfield's policies on Safeguarding, Whistleblowing, Anti-Bullying, and Reporting Concerns about a Child.

This policy applies to all staff, including clergy, PCC members, paid staff, volunteers including children's and youth workers, those involved in leading or coordinating music and worship, and anyone else involved in working or volunteering on behalf of All Saints, Lindfield.

Purpose of Policy

- To protect children and young people who are ministered to by All Saints, Lindfield and who make use of information technology (such as mobile phones/devices, games consoles and the Internet) as part of their involvement with the parish.
- To provide our staff, volunteers and parents with the overarching principles that guide our approach to e-safety.
- To ensure that, as a Christian community, we minister in line with our values and also within the law, in terms of how we use information technology and behave online.
- To guide us as we seek to equip the children and young people to whom we minister to be safe, discerning and wise users of information and communication technology.

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the children and young people to whom we minister and with whom we come into contact is paramount, and should govern our approach to the use and management of electronic communications technologies and online behaviour;
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse;
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare, and in helping young people to be responsible in their approach to e-safety;
- The use of information technology is an essential part of all our lives; it is involved in how we as a church gather and store information, as well as how we communicate with each other. It is an intrinsic part of the experience of children and young people, and is greatly beneficial to all. However, it can present challenges in terms of how we use it

responsibly, and, if misused either by an adult or a young person, can be actually or potentially harmful.

We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- Treating any child protection concern arising from the online world in the same way, taking it just as seriously, as concerns arising from the offline world.
- Ensuring that our parish safeguarding officer has access to up-to-date information and training regarding online safety, assisting them as appropriate to access this training.
- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers at All Saints, Lindfield avoid using private forms of electronic communication (text message, email, direct messaging including on social media) to communicate with the children and young people they are responsible for.
- Taking the use of such private communication between staff or volunteers and young people as seriously as one-on-one contact between adults and children without another responsible adult present. It is always the responsibility of the adult staff member or volunteer to put appropriate boundaries in place in their relationships with the young people with whom they minister, in both the offline and online worlds.
- Using open online forums to communicate with children, such as Facebook youth group pages to notify young people of events etc.
- Avoiding any form of inappropriate content in what we, our staff and our volunteers post online, including (but not limited to) sexual content, racist, sexist or otherwise bigoted content, or content promoting illegal activity.
- Maintaining electronic versions of sensitive personal data securely, according to the principles of the Data Protection Act or the General Data Protection Regulation.
- Providing age-appropriate awareness material, including training, to children and young people in relation to online safety. In particular, we will make them aware of the Thinkuknow website and about Childline.
- Providing awareness material to parents with regard to online safety. In particular, we will make them aware of the Thinkuknow, Parents Protect and UK Safer Internet Centre websites.

All forms of domestic abuse are wrong and must stop. We are committed to promoting and supporting environments which:

- ensure that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse;
- protect those vulnerable to domestic abuse from actual or potential harm;
- recognise equality amongst people and within relationships;
- enable and encourage concerns to be raised and responded to appropriately and consistently.

We recognise that:

- all forms of domestic abuse cause damage to the survivor and express an imbalance of power in the relationship;
- all survivors (regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity) have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse;
- domestic abuse can occur in all communities;
- domestic abuse may be a single incident, but is usually a systematic, repeated pattern which escalates in severity and frequency;
- domestic abuse, if witnessed or overheard by a child, is a form of abuse by the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour;
- working in partnership with children, adults and with other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of any child or adult suffering abuse.

We will endeavour to respond to domestic abuse by:

In all our activities –

- valuing, listening to and respecting both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

In our publicity –

- raising awareness about other agencies, support services, resources and expertise, through providing information in public and women-only areas of relevance to survivors, children and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

When concerns are raised –

- ensuring that those who have experienced abuse can find safety and informed help;
- working with the appropriate statutory bodies during an investigation into domestic abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the church community.

In our care –

- ensuring that informed and appropriate pastoral care is offered to any child, young person or adult who has suffered abuse;
- identifying and outlining the appropriate relationship of those with pastoral care responsibilities with both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

If you have any concerns or need to talk to someone, please contact any of the following:

Penny Hollebon | Antonia Easley | Stuart Silk | David Tuddenham