



## St Mary Redcliffe PCC

### Policy on Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults (ver 2017)

#### POLICY DOCUMENT

##### **Introduction**

St Mary Redcliffe Church PCC is committed to promoting the wellbeing of all those who visit, work and worship here. As part of this commitment we will ensure that we have robust systems in place to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm. This responsibility is shared by each member of the community and policies and procedures, whilst essential, cannot alone protect children and adults who are at risk. All members of the community need to be aware of potential risks to children, young people and vulnerable adults and know what action to take should they have concerns.

This policy is in line with the principles within the following documents (click to access);

[House of Bishops Policy for Safeguarding: Protecting All God's Children \(2010\)](#)

[Promoting a Safe Church \(2006\)](#)

[Practice Guidance Safer Recruitment \(2016\)](#)

It also follows the procedures and guidance produced by the Diocese of Bristol.

St Mary Redcliffe Church PCC is aware of the need to comply with legislation, statutory and non-statutory government guidance as well as being compliant with the policies and procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Safeguarding Adults Board.

This policy is in line with [Working together to Safeguard Children](#) (DH, 2015) and [Care Act](#) (2014).

##### **Who do we Safeguard?**

Churches should be safe places for everyone. However, some people may be more vulnerable than others and we need to pay particular attention to those people.

##### **All Children:**

There is no single law that defines the age of a child across the United Kingdom. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK government in 1991, states that a child *"means every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."*

All children are vulnerable to harm caused by others: they are reliant on adults to meet their basic needs, they are taught in most cases to respect and trust adults, they have limited independent access to public services.

### **Adults at Risk:**

Adults may be vulnerable to harm at various points in their lives. They may become vulnerable for a while and then less so through situational issues, ill health, disability or other causes.

There are a number of definitions of a 'Vulnerable Adult'. The Care Act 2014 which came into force in April 2015 contains the following definition "the safeguarding duties apply to an adult who has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and is experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect, and as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risks or the experience of abuse or neglect" (Chapter 14, care and Support Statutory Guidance, October 2014).

### **What increases a persons' vulnerability?**

Vulnerability is not an absolute in adults; an individual cannot be labelled as 'vulnerable' in the same way as a child is regarded as such. Childhood is absolute: someone who is not yet 18 years of age is a child; this is not the case with adult vulnerability.

Some of the factors that increase vulnerability include: a sensory or physical disability or impairment; a physical illness; a learning disability; mental ill health; an addiction to alcohol or drugs; frailty due to increasing age.

### **What is Harm?**

The words harm and abuse are both often used; they mean similar things.

Abuse is defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children, (DH 2015) as:

*"A form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children."* (Working Together, 2015, p92)

An adult at risk of abuse is defined in The Care Act (2014) as:

*"a person affected by physical disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health difficulties, dementia or long term illness, that you suspect or know is being harmed by another person, and who is or may be unable to protect themselves."*

### **Harm and Significant Harm**

Harm is what results from mistreatment or abuse. Harm means ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development, including, for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children, and gives local authorities a duty to make enquiries (S 47) to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child who is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. Significant harm is defined under sections 31(9) and (10) of the Children Act 1989 as amended by the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

*"Where the question of whether harm suffered by a child is significant depends on the child's health or development. The health or development shall be compared with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child."*

However, we must respond to any concern that a vulnerable person has been or may be harmed. By reporting our concerns early, we may avoid 'significant harm' ever happening. Whilst Local

Authorities have a statutory duty to intervene where significant harm has occurred, they can and do offer a whole range of support to prevent and minimise harm.

Further information regarding definitions and categories can be found in the Diocese of Bristol [“What is Safeguarding” categories and definitions](#).

### **Safeguarding Principles**

1. We are committed to the care of all children, young people and vulnerable adults.
2. The child’s welfare is paramount and a child is anyone who has not reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.
3. All confidential material will be appropriately and securely stored.
4. All activities will be resourced, insured and assessed for risk.
5. All who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults will have clear role descriptions and be appointed following a safer recruitment process.
6. Safeguarding will be a standing PCC agenda item and the [PCC will undertake its responsibility for safeguarding](#) with due care and diligence.
7. This policy will be reviewed by the PCC on an annual basis.

### **Safe Recruitment**

St Mary Redcliffe PCC is committed to a safe recruitment process. This will be conducted in line with the [Diocese of Bristol Safer Recruitment Guidelines](#) (Diocese of Bristol 2016) which are based on the current Church of England policy ([Safer Recruitment Policy for the Church of England 2016](#)). The process adopted by the PCC will be used when recruiting any paid or voluntary staff and will include use of the Disclosure and Barring Service when appropriate.

Click to access the following documents (also available from the parish office on request):

- [The Recruitment Process](#)
- [Disclosure and Barring Process](#)
- [Handling of Disclosure Information](#)
- [Fair Recruitment of Ex-Offenders policy](#)

### **Safe Working**

St Mary Redcliffe PCC is committed to creating an environment in which risks to children, young people and vulnerable adults are minimised. In order to do this those working with children, young people and vulnerable adults will be appropriately recruited, trained and supported in their roles. They will have clear role descriptions and they will know how to raise concerns whether that be about an individual who is at risk or a working process that may be putting individuals at risk. They will know how to respond to a disclosure from a child, young person or vulnerable adult and they will follow the [Immediate Action Flowchart](#). This process is to be followed by anyone whether they are working with children, young people and vulnerable adults or simply become aware of a safeguarding concern. This chart reflects national safeguarding procedures ([Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015](#)) and Diocesan procedures ([Safeguarding referrals and accessing advice 2016](#)).

If work is undertaken offsite the process outlined in [Off Site Visits Guidance](#) must be followed. This ensures that risk assessments are undertaken and correct ratios of adults to children/young people

are adhered to. Any offsite activity must be approved by the PCC to ensure that safeguarding standards have been met and that insurance is in place.

In line with the Diocese of Bristol guidance '[Church Building Hire Agreements: Safeguarding Considerations](#)' the PCC expects a hire agreement to be completed for all bookings. All those booking to use church premises will be provided with a copy of the PCC's 'Policy on Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults' and asked to sign the '[St Mary Redcliffe Safeguarding Agreement for the Hire of Church Premises](#)' to confirm that they have seen this and agree to abide by it.

### **Safe response**

St Mary Redcliffe PCC is committed to ensuring that children, young people and vulnerable adults are listened to and their voices heard. This is one of the most powerful ways of ensuring that disclosures of abuse are heard, taken seriously and responded to without delay and in an appropriate manner. All those working with children, young people and vulnerable adults will receive training so that they understand the limitations of confidentiality when a child or young person is at risk. This training will include information about how to respond to a disclosure and how to share concerns with the relevant authorities. We will cooperate with the police and Local Authority when raising a concern and during any investigation.

St Mary Redcliffe PCC has appointed a safeguarding officer who is available to offer advice and support. Any safeguarding concerns that are reported must be responded to in an appropriate and timely manner. The [Immediate Action Flowchart](#) details this and [Contact Details](#) for all the Local Authorities in the area, for the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer and for the St Mary Redcliffe Safeguarding Officer are available.

St Mary Redcliffe will work with the Diocese (and statutory authorities when appropriate) to ensure risk assessment and supervision as well as pastoral care is offered to any individual who is known to have offended against a child, young person or vulnerable adult. This will require ongoing risk management to ensure that the individual and children, young people and vulnerable adults are protected.

St Mary Redcliffe PCC is committed to ensuring that good record keeping including the safe storage of all safeguarding records is carried out as an integral component of the safeguarding process. Any incident relating to the safeguarding of a child or vulnerable adult will be recorded in writing and stored alongside all records relating to the safer recruitment process in line with best practice as detailed in [Safeguarding Records: Joint practice guidance for the Church of England and Methodist Church 2015](#).

### **Confidentiality and Consent**

A duty of confidence arises when information which is not already in the public domain is given on the understanding that it will not be shared with others. The request to keep information confidential may be explicit or it may be clear that there is a legitimate expectation on the part of the person giving the information that it will be held in confidence.

Confidentiality is not breached if the person who has given the information gives consent for it to be disclosed. However, information can be disclosed without consent if it can be justified to be in the public interest. If the information relates to the commission of a crime or where there is reason to believe that a child or adult is at risk of serious harm then the public interest test is met and information should be disclosed. In these circumstances, best practice would be to inform the person who has given the information that you have a duty to share it unless to do so would be deemed to increase the risk to them or others. In situations where it is not clear whether information should be

shared the key factors are necessity and proportionality. The person holding the information must assess the potential consequences of disclosing the information against the potential consequences of not disclosing.

[The Seven Golden Rules of Information Sharing](#) can help when weighing up this decision. The Parish Safeguarding Officer or Diocesan Safeguarding Officer can support in making a decision about whether to disclose information.

### **Responding to those who have experienced abuse**

In meeting our commitment to those who have experience abuse as a child or adult we will follow the [Diocese of Bristol Safeguarding Policy 2016](#) and when appropriate use the services provided by Authorised Listeners. We will also follow the [Church of England guidance on responding to domestic abuse 2006](#).

### **Responding to allegations of abuse by church staff, both paid and voluntary**

St Mary Redcliffe PCC has adopted the [Diocese of Bristol Allegations Management Procedure 2015](#).

All allegations of abuse or misconduct by parish volunteers, staff and members of the congregation should be reported to the Incumbent and/or Parish Safeguarding Officer. They should report to the Diocesan Safeguarding team immediately or if this is not possible then within 1 working day, who will advise on the process.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Team will then ensure that allegations of abuse or misconduct in relation to children (under 18) by church officers whether employed or volunteers will be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) as well as other statutory bodies as appropriate.

Allegations of abuse or misconduct in relation to adults (18 and over) by church officers whether employed or volunteers will be referred to the police and/or Local Authority as appropriate.

### **Conclusion**

**Safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of all people is fundamental to our commitment to the gospel as well as our responsibilities as members of the church and of our society. We will seek to carry out the principles outlined in this policy with the level of care and diligence that they require. This policy reflects both Local and National policy and as these change we will review this policy to ensure that we are working to best practice in safeguarding. This policy will be reviewed by the PCC on an annual basis to ensure it is kept up to date and reflects current practice.**