

The Parish of St. Matthew, High Brooms

SAFEGUARDING POLICY - PROMOTING A SAFER CHURCH

The following policy was agreed at the Parochial Church Council (PCC) meeting held on 15th July 2024. The House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy 'Promoting a Safer Church' was also adopted at this meeting.

The House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy states that,

"The care and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in Church activities is the responsibility of the whole Church. Everyone who participates in the life of the Church has a role to play in promoting a Safer Church for all."

"Safeguarding means the action the Church takes to promote a safer culture. This means we will promote the welfare of children, young people and adults, work to prevent abuse from occurring, seek to protect those that are at risk of being abused and respond well to those that have been abused. We will take care to identify where a person may present a risk to others and offer support to them whilst taking steps to mitigate such risks."

In accordance with the Church of England Safeguarding Policy, St. Matthew's Church is committed to:

- Promoting a safer environment and culture.
- Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church.
- Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation.
- Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons.
- Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons.
- Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others.

St. Matthew's Church will:

- Create a safe and caring place for all.
- Have a named Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) to work with the incumbent and the PCC to implement policy and procedures.
- Safely recruit, train and support all those with any responsibility for children, young people and adults to have the confidence and skills to recognise and respond to abuse.
- Ensure that there is appropriate insurance cover for all activities involving children and adults undertaken in the name of the parish.
- Display in church premises and on the church website the details of who to contact if there are safeguarding concerns or support needs.
- Listen to and take seriously all those who disclose abuse.
- Take steps to protect children and adults when a safeguarding concern of any kind arises, following House of Bishops guidance, including notifying the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) and statutory agencies immediately.
- Offer support to victims/survivors of abuse regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred.
- Care for and monitor any member of the church community who may pose a risk to children and adults whilst maintaining appropriate confidentiality and the safety of all parties.
- Ensure that health and safety policy, procedures and risk assessments are in place and that these are reviewed annually.
- Review the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Practices at least annually.

Each person who works and volunteers within this church community will agree to abide by this policy and the guidelines established by this church.

Responsibilities of the Parochial Church Council

At St. Matthew's Church we recognise that the few who are determined to harm children or adults, deliberately seek out groups or organisations where they can meet children or other vulnerable people. The Church is particularly vulnerable to these people. Creating and maintaining a safeguarding culture will discourage them from becoming involved for the wrong reasons and make it difficult for them to harm or abuse children or adults if they do.

To enable St. Matthew's Church to have a safeguarding culture, the PCC will:

1. Adopt and Implement the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy 'Promoting a Safer Church'.

This will be adopted each year at our Annual Parochial Church Meeting. An agenda item of safeguarding will be on each PCC meeting's agenda, so that the PCC can make sure that everything in this policy is being implemented effectively.

2. Appoint at least one appropriately experienced designated Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) to work with the incumbent and PCC. The PSO may also be the DBS administrator for staff and volunteers who work with children or vulnerable adults but if not, the PCC should appoint another individual for this role. The PSO and DBS Administrator will be supported, trained and given a copy of the parish safeguarding policy and procedures.

The Parish Safeguarding Officer for St. Matthew's Church, High Brooms is Julia Church (appointed in November 2021).

The DBS Administrator for St. Matthew's Church, High Brooms is Hannah Mwesigwa (appointed in April 2022).

3. Safely recruit, support and train all volunteers who work with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults.

The PCC will ensure that all church officers (volunteers) who work with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults:

- a. are recruited following the House of Bishops' Safer Recruitment practice guidance (see page 4 for more details);
- b. are aware of and work to the House of Bishops' safeguarding guidance and this safeguarding policy;
- c. complete diocesan safeguarding training at least every three years at the appropriate level.

All PCC members, as trustees of a charity, will be DBS checked (at Enhanced level and for both the Child and Adult Workforce) and will complete a PCC Member Trustee Eligibility and Fit and Proper Persons Declaration.

4. Display the following information:

- A formal statement of adoption of the House of Bishops 'Promoting a Safer Church; safeguarding policy statement'. This will be signed on behalf of the PCC and updated annually after the APCM. This will be displayed in the church and church halls.
- The Diocesan Safer Church poster – this includes contact details of our PSO, the Diocesan Safeguarding Team, and information about where to get help with child and adult safeguarding issues, domestic abuse and key helplines e.g. ChildLine. This will be displayed in the church and church halls.
- Our own Safeguarding poster, with a photo and contact details of our PSO, contact details of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team, and information about where to get help with child and adult safeguarding issues, domestic abuse and key helplines e.g. ChildLine. This will be displayed in the church and church halls.

- All the above information will also be displayed on our website, through a link on the home page. On that page there will also be links to this policy, the House of Bishops Safeguarding Policy and the Diocesan Safeguarding webpage, as well as links to outside agencies for help and support.
- Domestic Abuse posters and details of helplines will be displayed in all toilets.
- Contact details of the Vicar, Churchwardens and church staff are displayed in the church building and on our website.
- A hard copy of this policy and the Parish Safeguarding Handbook will be available in the church building.

5. Respond well to all concerns, suspicions and allegations of abuse or harm. In order to do this, the PCC will:

- Create an environment which is welcoming and respectful and enables safeguarding concerns to be raised and responded to openly, promptly and consistently;
- Have a procedure in place to deal promptly with safeguarding allegations or suspicions of abuse in accordance with the relevant policy and practice guidance and in consultation with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (see page 10 for more details). This includes reporting / seeking advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser for all safeguarding concerns or allegations;
- Offer support to victims / survivors of abuse regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred.
- Ensure that known offenders or others who may pose a risk to children and/or vulnerable adults are effectively managed and monitored in consultation with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

6. Provide appropriate insurance cover and risk assessments for all activities undertaken in the name of the PCC which involve children and vulnerable adults.

St. Matthew's Church has the Parish Plus insurance policy with Ecclesiastical Insurance Company. Risk assessments will be completed and reviewed regularly for each activity which is associated with either children or vulnerable adults and run in the name of the Church.

7. Store information securely:

The PCC will comply with all data protection legislation especially in regard to storing information about the 'church workforce', including volunteers and any safeguarding records.

During an interregnum the PCC will ensure that all information about safeguarding matters is securely stored before passing the information on to the new incumbent. The departing incumbent must give any safeguarding information they hold to the Parish Safeguarding Officer, who can pass the information on to the new incumbent when he/she takes up their new role.

8. Review and Report Progress:

The PSO should regularly report on safeguarding in the parish.

Safeguarding will be a standing agenda item at each PCC meeting.

At the APCM the PSO will provide an annual report in relation to safeguarding.

In the PCC's annual report will be a statement which reports on progress and a statement as to whether or not the PCC has complied with the duty to have "due regard" to the House of Bishops' guidance in relation to safeguarding.

Safer recruitment

A key way of protecting children and adults from harm is to ensure the careful recruitment of those working with them, whether they are employed staff or volunteers.

The House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy states, 'The Church will select and vet all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the Church'.

The PCC is responsible for the appointment of those working with children, young people and vulnerable adults in St. Matthew's Church. However, the responsibility is delegated to the incumbent and Operations Manager (who is also the Lead Recruiter).

The following table shows the process of safer recruitment for paid and unpaid roles within St. Matthew's Church of those working with children, young people and vulnerable adults:

	Paid roles	Unpaid roles
1. Job / role description	There will be a clear job description and person specification, including skills and experience required, level of DSB check required and training required.	There will be a volunteer agreement with the role outline, including tasks and responsibilities, frequency of serving, level of DSB check required and training required.
2. Advertise	Advertise paid roles through job search sites, social media and other means, including the job description with the advert.	Advertise unpaid roles within church notices.
3. Application form	Ask all applicants to complete an application form and submit a Curriculum Vitae. Always ask for, take up and check two references.	Ask all applicants to complete a volunteer application form, which includes the confidential declaration form. Always ask for, take up and check two references. Give the volunteer agreement to applicants at this stage, so they can see the requirements of the role.
4. Shortlist	Shortlist, carefully examining the application forms. Identify any gaps in employment / personal history and ensure those shortlisted meet the requirements of the person specification.	Review any interest from volunteers and assess suitability against requirements.
5. Interview	Have a face-to-face interview with pre-planned and clear questions to assess applicants' suitability for the role. Seek explanations for gaps in employment / personal history. Ask the individual to complete a test or presentation if applicable, or lead a session.	Have an informal discussion with the volunteer about the role, checking that they are happy with the requirements.

6. Offer the role	Decide whom to offer the role to. This decision will be made by the interviewing panel. This is subject to completion of all checks to the satisfaction of the PCC. No role can commence until satisfactory checks have been completed.	Offer the role to the volunteer if you are happy with their suitability, subject to DBS check. Ask the volunteer to sign the volunteer agreement now and find out how frequently they are willing to serve.
7. DBS check	Once the applicant has accepted the role, ask the applicant to complete the Confidential Declaration form and to start the DBS check for an Enhanced Criminal Record Check. Any blemished DBS checks or information of concern on the CDF must be risk assessed by the DSA.	Ask the volunteer to start the DBS check online for an Enhanced Criminal Record Check. Any blemished DBS checks or information of concern on the CDF must be risk assessed by the DSA.
8. Appoint	Once all checks are satisfactory and support the interview decision, the person can be formally appointed.	Agree a start date with the volunteer and add them to rotas.
9. Probation period	There will be a 6-month period of probation for any paid role. This will be reviewed throughout, as well as at the end of this period.	
10. Induct, train and support	Induct new employees using the Staff Induction Checklist. Give new staff a copy of the staff handbook (which includes a code of conduct) and relevant policies. Ensure supervision / support is in place and arrange for attendance on the Church of England safeguarding training. Training should be completed within one month of starting the role.	Give volunteers the volunteer handbook (see details overleaf). Make sure new volunteers are shown what to do in their first sessions by the group leader. Arrange for attendance on the Church of England safeguarding training of the relevant level. Training should be completed within three months of starting the role.

In order to make sure staff and volunteers feel supported and have the opportunity to give feedback, the following will happen regularly:

- Staff members will have annual appraisal meetings and less formal check-ups halfway through the year.
- Staff members will have weekly staff meetings on a Monday morning with the vicar.
- Each staff member will have a PCC member to meet with for support and mentorship.
- There will be team meetings for the various volunteer teams, with one meeting per year for each team.
- Volunteer team leaders will check in with volunteers at sessions and provide opportunities for debriefing and feedback.

Safeguarding training

The House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy states that the Church 'will train and equip church officers to have the confidence and skills they need to care for and support children, young people and vulnerable adults and to recognise and respond to abuse.'

There are various training modules for volunteers and staff to complete, depending on their role.

In line with the recommendations of the Diocese of Rochester, St. Matthew's Church has the following requirements for safeguarding training:

Basic Awareness module only – welcome team, coffee team, worship team, tech team (if children involved), preachers, hub and home group leaders.

Basic and Foundation modules only – anyone working with children and youth, PCC members, pastoral care team, Operations Manager.

Basic, Foundation and Leadership modules – Vicar, church wardens, Parish Safeguarding Officer, staff member with responsibility for children and youth work, pastoral care team leader, leaders of services.

In addition to the above modules, the following modules are a requirement for certain roles:

Safer recruitment and People Management module – Parish Safeguarding Officer, Lead Recruiter for DBS checks, Operations Manager (if not Lead Recruiter), Vicar.

Domestic Abuse Awareness module – Vicar, Parish Safeguarding Officer, PCC members (including church wardens), pastoral care team leader.

Safeguarding training should be updated every 3 years at the highest level only.

The dates of all completed safeguarding training are recorded on Churchsuite, and the Operations Manager has responsibility for reminding volunteers and staff when training is due.

Volunteer Handbook

As part of their induction, all volunteers will be given the volunteer handbook, as well as a volunteer agreement to read and sign for our files.

The volunteer handbook includes:

Our commitment as a church to volunteers

Outline of the role and expected commitment to the role

Details of what happens in the group / activity they are volunteering for

Code of safer working practice

Safeguarding (including training required for their role and handling a disclosure or suspected abuse)

Definitions of abuse and neglect of children and vulnerable adults

Health and Safety

Use of social media guidelines

GDPR

Other useful church policies and contact details for safeguarding concerns

Creating a safe environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults

The House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy Statement states that, 'The Church will strive to create and maintain environments that are safer for all, that promote well-being, that prevent abuse, and that create nurturing, caring conditions within the Church for children, young people and vulnerable adults... The Church will strive to support all church officers to adhere to safer working good practice and to challenge the abuse of power.'

These are the ways that St. Matthew's Church will strive to make our environments safe for all and to reduce the risk of abuse or harm happening in our organisation:

- **Code of Safer Working Practice**

All those working with children, young people and adults on behalf of St. Matthew's Church will be given a volunteer handbook. Included in that handbook is a code of safer working practice, which volunteers will be asked to agree to. This lays out the expectations for how volunteers should treat others, and behaviour which is acceptable and not acceptable.

(A copy of the volunteer handbook is in Appendix 1).

- **Risk assessments**

Risk assessments will be carried out for all activities which St. Matthew's Church runs, and for its buildings and staff.

These risk assessments detail the risks involved in activities, and the actions taken to reduce these risks. This includes things like safeguarding, physical risks, emergency planning, fire safety and risks to health. Risk assessments for repeated activities and buildings will be reviewed and updated annually. Risk assessments for one-off activities will be done each time a new activity is planned.

All activities run by St. Matthew's Church are agreed by the PCC annually, and risk assessments are reviewed and approved by a sub-group of the PCC.

- **Consent forms and registers**

A registration form will be completed by the parent or guardian for every child (under 18 years old) who attends groups or activities run by St. Matthew's Church, including details such as parent's contact details, medical information, and any special needs, as well as details of the child.

A form will be completed when the child joins a group, and the details then added to ChurchSuite. Consent requests will then be sent out annually from ChurchSuite for all children on our books, asking parents / guardians to review and update any details and to consent to us holding the information.

These consent forms also include consent for photographs to be taken and used internally or externally.

Separate one-off consent forms will be filled in by parents / guardians for all special events or events away from the church premises so that up-to-date information is held.

Leaders of all groups and activities involving children and young people will have access to the information contained on consent forms for the duration of their activity, in case of any incidents or emergencies.

Attendance registers are kept for all groups and activities involving children and young people and are stored on ChurchSuite. These include adults present in the group.

- **First Aid provision**

First Aid kits are available in all our church buildings, with accident books kept in each building as well.

It is our aim to have a first aider or someone with medical training present in all groups for children and young people.

We will encourage volunteers in these groups to undertake first aid training and will facilitate this if possible.

There will be a first aider present for all trips away from the church premises that involve children and young people. A first aid kit will always be taken on trips away from the church buildings.

Parents / guardians will be informed at the end of the session if a child has received any first aid during the session or has hurt themselves in any way. If further treatment is necessary, the parent / guardian will be called as soon as possible during the session.

A defibrillator is soon to be installed on the outside of the church building. This machine is owned by First Responders, who will be responsible for the maintaining of it. They will also provide training for the community on how to use it. All church first aiders will be encouraged to attend this training.

The church office will hold the code for unlocking the defibrillator. The code will also be given out when someone calls 999 and reports an emergency nearby.

- **Ratios**

Each group that St. Matthew's Church runs that involve children, young people or vulnerable adults will have at two leaders present. Wherever possible this will include one male and one female leader.

Those working or volunteering with children on behalf of the church should avoid situations where they are on their own with a child.

The minimum staffing levels for groups where the leaders are responsible for the children and young people is as follows (as set out by OFSTED and the NSPCC):

0 – 2 years	1 adult to 3 children	1:3
2 – 3 years	1 adult to 4 children	1:4
4 – 8 years	1 adult to 6 children	1:6
9 – 12 years	1 adult to 8 children	1:8
13 – 18 years	1 adult to 10 children	1:10

These ratios do not need to be followed for groups or activities where parents are responsible for their own children, but we will still have two leaders present at these groups (including staff members in the building) who do not have their own children there, in case of emergencies or incidents.

For trips away from the church premises or other special events, or if groups have children with special needs in, it may be necessary to have more leaders. This will be decided according to the risk assessment carried out.

- **Transport**

St. Matthew's Church does not offer transport to children and young people to and from church activities. Volunteers should not give lifts to children and young people who are in the groups they are leading, due to the safeguarding risks associated with this.

If a parent is unable to pick a child up from a church run group, then they will be advised to arrange for another parent or relative to come and collect the child. Two volunteers must stay in the building with the child until they are collected.

If a parent is unable to organise transport for their child to get to an activity or event, they will be advised to contact other parents with children in the group to share lifts.

In the unplanned event that a child or young person has to be taken in a volunteer's car because the risk of not doing that is too great, there must be two volunteers present and the child or young person should sit in the back. A record of this should be made immediately after the event and reported to the PSO or Vicar.

- **Home visits and pastoral care**

Visiting people at home can be a valuable aspect of pastoral care. Care must be taken, however, both for the protection of those being visited and for the those doing the visiting. There should be accountability and transparency in the manner in which church volunteers engage in lone working or visits to homes, especially if adults are vulnerable.

Home visits to children and young people should only be carried out with a parent / guardian present at all times. The church visitor should make the parent aware of this before the visit.

Visits to vulnerable adults or those with a history of violence, abuse or mental health issues should always be carried out in pairs, and meetings should take place in public places where possible, rather than in people's homes.

However, where home visits, and especially lone home visits are unavoidable, the following precautions should be taken:

- set an appointment for the visit in advance, rather than just turning up unannounced
- ensure someone knows where you are and when you expect to return (colleague, family member, etc)
- carry a mobile phone with you and ensure you have emergency contact details easily accessible
- allow the host to lead the way so that the door cannot be locked behind you
- sit as close to the door as possible should you need to escape quickly
- make a note of the visit; store all such notes in accordance with data protection requirements
- if you are asked to make any purchases on behalf of the person, always retain receipts and return both them and any change to the person immediately. Keep a record of any transactions and the reason for them.
- take care regarding accepting any gifts other than token items, to avoid misunderstandings or subsequent accusations from the person or their family. If courtesy demands that you accept a small gift, declare it to someone at church, for instance a church warden or the PCC Treasurer, to ensure transparency. If someone wants to make a donation to the church, put it in an envelope, mark it on the outside as a donation and obtain a receipt from the Treasurer.

- **Use of social media**

Social media is an important communication tool for churches, but also comes with risks, especially where children and young people are concerned.

Church employees and volunteers should follow these guidelines for the safe use of social media in the church context:

- Avoid 'lone working' in the online world. Practically, this means avoiding one-to-one online chat (e.g. direct messaging) or video calling between adults and young people.
- Do not use personal social media accounts to contact children or young people and do not add children, young people or vulnerable adults as friends on your personal accounts. The simplest way to observe the above two precautions is to avoid having leaders and young people as 'friends' on social media (e.g. Facebook).

- Have an official account for the group in question (such as 'St Andrew's Anywhere Youth Group') and ask young people to 'like' that page. Any news about group events or anything else can be posted on that page. More than one leader should have access to this page, providing for accountability and transparency.
- Treat online 'consent' the same as offline 'consent'. You will need the consent of the individual and/or their parents to use and store photographs, to retain any information relating to them online, and so on.
- Make sure privacy settings for social media accounts are set at an appropriate level for the activity.
- Report any safeguarding concerns that arise on social media to the Parish Safeguarding Officer.
- Avoid sharing personal details on social media.
- Keep online communication to reasonable hours (e.g. 8am – 8pm) and avoid school hours.
- Uphold minimum age limits for social media platforms which are set with safeguarding issues in mind (currently 16 for WhatsApp and 13 for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube).
- Do not use personal mobile phones or cameras to take photos of children and young people, and do not store any personal details of church children or young people on personal phones.
- Volunteers should remember that their conduct on social media reflects on the church and could be linked back to the church. They should follow the guidelines in the Volunteer Handbook (see Appendix 1).

- **Hire of premises**

When letting the church or church halls to third party groups, St. Matthew's Church will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the group's proposed activities do not present a safeguarding risk.

To that end the letting agreement provided by St. Matthew's Church to third party hirers will include that:

- the hirer will take all reasonable steps to ensure that no person is at risk of harm in the course of the group's activities (including by conducting its activities in accordance with best safeguarding practice);
- the activities of the group are covered by an insurance policy providing public liability cover in respect of any claims arising out of the group's activities in relation to children and vulnerable adults taking part in its activities;
- the group hiring the premises have a safeguarding policy that is the equivalent to the parish's policy. If they do not, then they should be invited to sign up to the parish's safeguarding policy, including the Code of Safer Working Practice, as part of the letting agreement.
- any failure on the part of the third-party group to comply with the above three points would constitute a breach of the agreement and may, depending upon the severity of the failure, result in the agreement being terminated.

If a third-party group is unwilling to accept such terms St. Matthew's Church will decline to allow it to use the premises.

Responding well to every safeguarding concern or allegation

The abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults can take various forms.

All those in roles with children, young people or vulnerable adults in our church are made aware of these forms of abuse through the safeguarding training they do, and through the volunteer handbook, which includes details of this.

In the same way, all staff and volunteers are made aware of the procedure for reporting concerns of abuse or disclosures of abuse.

If a volunteer or staff member hears a disclosure of abuse, they are advised to:

- Listen.
- Take what is said seriously.
- Only use open questions and not leading questions
- Remain calm.
- Take into account the person's age and level of understanding.
- Check, if face to face, whether it is ok to take notes while they talk so the listener can make sure they capture the information accurately.
- Offer reassurance that disclosing is the right thing to do.
- Establish only as much information as is needed to be able to tell the Parish Safeguarding Officer / DSA and statutory authorities what is believed to have happened, when and where.
- Check what the person hopes to happen as a result of the disclosure.
- Tell the child or adult what will happen next.

They should not make promises that can't be kept, including promises of confidentiality. They should also not contact the person who the allegations are against, or investigate anything themselves.

These are the steps that will be taken if someone has a concern or if disclosure of abuse is reported:

- Emergency: If the volunteer or staff member believes a child or adult is in immediate danger of significant or serious harm, they will contact the emergency services on 999. Once the immediate situation is dealt with, they will then report the incident to the PSO or incumbent.
- All concerns or disclosures will be reported to the Parish Safeguarding Officer or incumbent. If it is not an emergency, then the concern should be passed on within 24 hours. If neither the PSO nor incumbent are available, the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) should be contacted directly. If the concern arises in an activity, it may be discussed with the group / activity leader, who will contact the Parish Safeguarding Officer or incumbent.
- The PSO / incumbent must then contact the DSA within 24 hours of being told of a concern or disclosure.
- The person who reported the concern or disclosure to the PSO / incumbent / DSA should record the details. A written record should be made as soon as possible afterwards or before the end of the day, including the time, date, location, persons present and how the concern or allegation was received, e.g. by telephone, face-to-face conversation, letter, etc. The record should include details of information provided to that person as well as the information received and should be factual only. The record should be signed and dated. A copy of the record should be passed to the PSO / incumbent, who will pass it to the DSA. The records should be kept secure and confidential.
- The volunteer / staff member who reported the allegation or abuse must not share the details with anyone else once it has been reported. It is important that those disclosing abuse know that the details will only be shared with those who need to know.

- The DSA will offer advice, support and guidance and help to make the required referrals. If there is a risk of harm, the DSA must report the concerns to the statutory agencies within 24 hours receiving them. This would be Children's or Adult Social Care and/or the police. There should be close communication between the DSA and PSO/incumbent until the situation is resolved. The archdeacon should also be informed.

- All records about a safeguarding case and the actions taken concerning it will be kept confidential and filed securely, with only the incumbent, PSO and Operations Manager having access to them.

Domestic abuse

The House of Bishops' policy states that 'The Church is committed to those who have been victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse in all its forms is contrary to the will of God and an affront to human dignity. All need to play their part in preventing or halting it'.

The welfare of the adult victim of domestic abuse is important, but where there are children in the family it must be understood that they too are victims of domestic abuse.

As a church, we will:

- Report suspicions or allegations of domestic abuse in the same way as other safeguarding concerns, to the PSO.
- Make sure all those in relevant roles undertake training about domestic abuse.
- Display information about domestic abuse helplines and local services.

Caring pastorally for victims / survivors of abuse and affected others

Part of responding well to all concerns, suspicions and allegations of abuse or harm is caring for those who have experienced this.

The House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy 2017 states that 'The Church will endeavour to offer care and support to all those that have been abused, regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred ...Those who have suffered abuse within the Church will receive a compassionate response, be listened to and be taken seriously. Our first response to those who have suffered abuse, especially abuse within the Church, should be compassionate; we must listen and take what we are hearing seriously.'

The ways that we will support victims / survivors of abuse are:

- Offering trusted people to listen, talk and pray with those affected by abuse
- Signposting to professional organisations, including for medical support, therapy, etc.
- Being open to learn from their experiences in creating a safeguarding culture.

Ex-offender's policy – responding to those who may present a known risk to children, young people or vulnerable adults within our congregation

The House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy 2017 states, 'The Church, based on the message of the gospel, opens its doors to all. It will therefore endeavour to offer pastoral care and support to any member of the church community whom may present a known risk'.

This means that there are likely to be those with criminal convictions for sexual offences and other forms of abuse attending church. In addition, there may be those who do not have convictions or cautions but where there are sound reasons for considering that they still might pose a risk to others.

Some examples of the risk that individuals may pose to children, young people and adults are:

- Sexual offences – against both adults and children: this includes accessing indecent images of children on the internet.
- Financial abuse: targeting of vulnerable adults for financial gain, for example, asking for money, the acceptance of large 'gifts' or offering to do a job for someone at an extortionate rate of pay.

St. Matthew's Church will always contact the DSA as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours, if we learn that any of the following people worship in our church:

1. Anyone placed on the sex offenders register, with a violent offence or conviction and/or who is barred from working with children or adults by the Disclosure and Barring Service.
2. Anyone who admits to being an abuser including non-recent abuse.
3. Anyone who is subject to an investigation for suspected abuse, including possession of indecent images of children, and/or is suspended from their usual role.
4. Anyone who may pose a risk to other church members due to their behaviour, irrespective of their criminal status.

Category (4) may include a person in relation to whom:

- An allegation of abuse against a child or adult has been investigated, but the matter has not proceeded to court, or the person has been acquitted, or the matter is currently the subject of proceedings in the criminal or civil courts but the person may still pose a risk.
- A complaint or grievance has been received alleging inappropriate behaviour, which is not criminal.
- There have been concerns about the person's alleged abusive behaviour to a previous or current partner.

If the DSA is made aware by any other source of any person in the above categories who is intending to or is worshipping at a local parish church, he/she will notify the Parish Safeguarding Officer / incumbent in the first instance.

The DSA will determine the appropriate action to be taken to best safeguard the parish and its congregation, based on the particular facts and circumstances of each case. They will undertake a risk assessment and the formation of a risk management plan known as a Safeguarding Agreement. This will involve the respondent and usually the incumbent, church warden, Parish Safeguarding Officer and, if involved, statutory agencies e.g. police, National Probation Service and Children's Social Care. Who is involved will depend on the case.

If a person is assessed as posing a risk to children or adults, the DSA, together with any statutory agencies involved, will support the parish to:

- Form a small group of people to offer pastoral support, friendship and to monitor the respondent.
- Maintain the highest levels of confidentiality unless there is a breach of the agreement, and it is necessary to inform others to protect a child or vulnerable adult.
- Agree with the respondent that he/she worship elsewhere if his/her victim or their family worship in the same church.

The Safeguarding Agreement may include the following elements:

- Attend designated services or meetings only.
- Always be with a designated chaperone when in the church building.
- Sit apart from children.
- Stay away from areas of the building where children or vulnerable adults meet.
- Attend a house group where there are no children or vulnerable adults.
- Decline hospitality where there are children or vulnerable adults.
- Never be alone with children or vulnerable adults.
- Never work or be part of a mixed group with children or vulnerable adults.
- Take no role or office in the church which gives him or her status or authority as others may deem that person to be trustworthy.

The church wardens should be involved in the drawing up of the written agreement with the respondent. Church wardens can direct parishioners where to sit and have a duty to maintain good order at divine service.

The Safeguarding Agreement will be monitored and reviewed at least annually.

Should the respondent refuse to sign the agreement the DSA will advise the parish and liaise with the police and other relevant agencies, as required, to seek a resolution. Any breach should be shared with the DSA immediately, who will liaise with the statutory agencies, as required.

Record keeping

Opening a church safeguarding case file

Whenever a safeguarding concern or allegation occurs in our church, a case file will be opened. This record should include details of who is involved, key contact details, dates of when the information became known and the nature of the concerns. The record should include ongoing actions with dates, other key documents on the case file (e.g. observation notes, reports, consent forms etc.) and the case closure date. Records should use straightforward language and be concise and accurate so that they can be understood by anyone not familiar with the case.

Record retention and security

The safeguarding case files, whether electronic or paper, must be stored securely by the incumbent and the PSO. This should include identifying and limiting who should have access to them. Records in relation to safeguarding issues, even if they have not been proven, should be maintained in accordance with the Church's retention guidance. If the incumbent moves from the church, the records should be passed to the new incumbent via the PSO during the interregnum.

Data Protection and information sharing - The PCC will comply with all data protection legislation especially in regard to storing information about the 'church workforce', including volunteers, any safeguarding records and registers and consent forms for children and young people.

The PCC will also comply with the Church Of England's record keeping guidelines relating to how long records should be kept for.

Personal information in relation to safeguarding will often be sensitive and is likely to be classed as what is called 'special categories of personal data' under the GDPR, which means extra care will need to be taken when handling such data. Nevertheless, it is important to be aware that the Data Protection Act 2018 includes specific reference to processing data in relation to the 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' and allows individuals to share, in certain situations, personal data without consent.

'The GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 do not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children and young people safe' and this can equally be said to apply to vulnerable adults.

Referrals of suspected abuse of adults are made to Adult Social Services and the police. Where possible, for a person over 18, this should be done with their written consent.

Information can be shared legally without consent, if a person is unable to or cannot reasonably be expected to gain consent from the individual concerned, or if to gain consent could place somebody at risk. Relevant personal data can be shared lawfully without consent if it is to keep a child or vulnerable adult safe from neglect or physical, emotional or mental harm, or if it is protecting their physical, mental or emotional well-being. Decisions about sharing information of this nature should never be made by just the PSO or the incumbent, they should always be discussed with the DSA.