

St George's Church

Policy on Safeguarding Children

and

Good Practice Guidelines



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Introduction

In 2010 the House of Bishops published an updated policy document for child protection in the Church of England entitled, 'Protecting all God's Children'. It has the purpose of establishing common practice across dioceses and to enable parishes to develop appropriate policy statements for their context concerning the care and safety of children,

'The church recognises that it is required by God to foster relationships of the utmost integrity, respect, truthfulness and trustworthiness. Clergy and laity who come into contact with children within the church need to operate within a carefully thought out framework of policy, procedures and good practise which will ensure that children are safeguarded and nurtured within a culture of informed vigilance.' (Protecting all God's Children p.7)

The Diocese of Birmingham produced the child protection policy 'God's Children Our Diocese' in November 2005 and has annually updated the document. The [2013](#) revision of St George's Policy reflects and has taken material from the above mentioned policies, fourth revision 2011

Abbreviation used throughout include

BSA – Bishop's Safeguarding Advisor

DBS – Disclosure and Barring Scheme

GCOD – God's children our Diocese, B.ham Diocesan policy document (available in Parish Office)

PSC - Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator

PCC – Parochial Church Council

Responsibilities of the Parish

1. It is the policy of St George's Church to provide a safe and secure environment in which children can thrive and develop and where all aspects of their welfare will be protected. The Priest in Charge and PCC accept the prime duty of care by adopting and implementing a child safeguarding policy and procedures and recommended good practice with children and young people.
2. St George's Parish have responsibility for the recruitment of paid workers and volunteers in all Church sponsored organizations. In recruiting staff, either paid or voluntary, full-time or part-time, St George's Church Centre will follow a systematic selection process designed to assess the applicant's suitability for the post and to work with children. (See recruitment policy)
3. The PCC will appoint a Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator to implement policy and procedures and ensure concerns about children are dealt with appropriately and a Children's Advocate to represent children's views and needs with regards to ministry, mission and worship and their pastoral care.
4. The PCC will ensure all those authorized to work with children and young people or in a position of authority are appropriately appointed, trained and supported and provide all workers and volunteers with a copy of the Parish Child Safeguarding policy, procedures and good practice guidelines.
5. Pay particular attention to children with special needs and those from ethnic minorities to ensure their full integration and protection within the church community.
6. .Create an environment which takes children seriously.
7. Ensure appropriate pastoral care and support for children and adults who are victims of abuse
8. Ensure those who may pose a threat to children and young people are effectively managed and monitored.
9. Ensure health and safety procedures are in place.
10. Provide appropriate insurance cover for all activities undertaken in the name of the parish.
11. Review the implementation of the child safeguarding policy, procedures and good practice, annually.

12.The Family Lives telephone number will be displayed.

13.We will ensure that some training is undertaken by those acting in the name of our parish and we will review our policy and overall practice annually.

14.The following groups are subject to DBS procedures

- Clergy (checked by Diocese)
- Church Workers
- J.C. club leaders (Junior Church/Sunday Club)
- Activity Day Leaders
- Activity Evening Leaders
- Church Wardens
- Deputy Church Wardens

Hirers of Church Premises

The PCC has a duty of care to advise individuals and organizations working with children and young people who hire or use church property, of their responsibility as hirers for the welfare and safety of the children in their care and the importance of maintaining a healthy and safe environment.

All hirers should be made aware of and issued with a copy of the parish policy. They should be informed of the name and contact details of the PSC and made aware their activity is not insured under church insurance.

Organisations who hire church premises for activities with children or young people should sign the statement recommended by The Church of England – Birmingham for church hirers confirming that workers/volunteers who staff their activities will follow all current safeguarding legislation and government guidance and will make themselves familiar with the Parish's `Safeguarding Children Policy.

Private individuals who wish to hire church premises for ad-hoc events must sign the recommended statement agreeing to take full responsibility for the children and young people at their event.

Recruitment Policy

The P.C.C. of the parish of St George's Church Centre. Newtown. Birmingham gives paramount importance to the nurture and care of children and young people. We recognise our responsibility to guard against the possibility of physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children and young people by persons who may be acting in the name of our parish. Therefore:

If a paid position needs a person to have a DBS disclosure it will be made clear in the advertisement for the position.

All applicants (paid or voluntary) will be given a copy of the St. George's Child Safeguarding Children Policy, be aware of 'God's Children, our Diocese' documents.

Prospective appointees (paid or voluntary) should be regarded as job applicants and have a defined role, complete an application form, and meet / have an interview with the Priest in Charge.

Name two referees, one of which should be from the current employer or previous church, at least one reference from a person who has experience of the applicant's paid work or volunteering with children.

Complete a 'Confidential Declaration' form

Have an appropriate interview.

Provide a disclosure at the appropriate level from the Disclosure and Barring Scheme.

Be offered the post subject to a probationary period.

Have the appointment confirmed in writing by the authorising body.

Be formally commissioned for their role.

All records will be kept by the Priest in Charge on a confidential, secure and indefinite basis.

DBS Procedure

The PCC will appoint a Parish Identity Verifier to administer the online DBS check process

The selected applicant will be asked to complete an online application form and take their identity documents { e.g. Birth and marriage certificates (where applicable), driving licence, passport } to the Parish Identity Verifier for verification.

The Parish Identity Verifier will be notified when the DBS certificate has been issued to the applicant.

Where the certificate contains no information, the Priest in Charge and/or PSC will be notified so that the appointment can continue.

Where the DBS certificate and/or Confidential Self-Declaration form contain information the applicant will be contacted by the Bishop's Safeguarding Advisor and a risk assessment carried out.

The Parish Identity Verifier will be notified of the outcome

Interregnum

During an interregnum responsibility for Safeguarding rests with the church wardens and PCC, together with the Area dean and PSC. The Church of England – Birmingham safeguarding team will discuss with the church wardens arrangements for safeguarding during the vacancy.

If any recruitment procedures reveal any reasons why an individual should not be allowed to work with children and young people the Bishop's Safeguarding Advisor will be informed.

Child Safeguarding Procedures

Direct allegations of abuse

An allegation of abuse is when someone, who may or may not be the child concerned, makes a direct statement that abuse has taken place.

All allegations of child abuse, from whatever source, should be referred to PSC as soon as possible and BSA informed within 24 hrs.

A referral should be made to Children's Social Care Services as soon as possible, if the BSA cannot be contacted immediately (see contact details)

The worker/volunteer must not promise to keep the allegation a secret.

The worker/volunteer should let the child speak freely for as long as he or she wants to and should record exactly what was said and not try to interpret the comments in any way. Any written comments will be kept on a confidential and indefinite basis by the Priest in Charge.

If the child has made an allegation about a specific person, workers / volunteers must not try to question that person themselves.

Such procedures will be followed to enable the clergy, paid laity and volunteers to maintain the highest possible standards in their own conduct, and also to be protected from rumour or suspicion which will damage credibility and cause misunderstanding.

Suspicious of Abuse

A suspicion is where there are indicators that child abuse may have taken place but where there is no direct allegation or disclosure to confirm this. (God's Children Our Diocese section 3. p.3)

Indicators may include

The behavior or appearance of a child

The emotional responses or reactions by a child to a particular situation.

Physical signs, such as the presence of unexplained injuries.

Environmental factors, e.g. knowledge of domestic violence within the family, the presence of a known abuser in contact with the family.

Worrying behaviour of an adult.

Where there are suspicions of abuse

Concerns should be shared and guidance sought from the Priest in Charge, and/or the Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator, and/or from the Bishop's Safeguarding Advisor.

However it may be necessary to take immediate action in certain situations.

- Immediate action must be taken to ensure a child's safety if a child has injuries and needs medical attention.
- If a child is refusing to go home because of abuse in which case social services or the police should be contacted.
- when a child has disclosed that there is a likelihood of them suffering significant harm on returning home (contact social services or the police)

Allegations of Child Abuse made against a member of the Clergy or someone holding the Bishop's Licence.

It is the responsibility of the person to whom the allegation is made to report this to Social Services or the police. However, in such a circumstance, if necessary, this person may seek support in making this referral and should contact the BSA.

Following the incident being reported to Social Services and/or the police, it must be immediately reported to the BSA.

The BSA will set up a core group within the Diocese to manage the process which will be responsible for ensuring appropriate support is provided for all affected.

Suggestions of Abuse from Other Sources

Workers/ volunteers may become aware of expressions of concern about a particular individual.

These suspicions must be passed onto the PSC and/or the Priest in Charge as soon as possible who will then act upon the advice of the Bishop's Safeguarding Advisor

Confession

If a priest receives a confession from someone who has abused a child while the seal of the confessional remains absolute, the priest will consider whether the child is still at risk and the person making the confession will be urged to report the abuse to Social Services. Absolution may be withheld until this is done.

Outside of the formal confession although confidentiality is of the highest importance it is not absolute and if children are at risk from the person making the disclosure then it must be reported to Social Services

Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse

The following situations are addressed by the Birmingham Diocesan's policy for Safeguarding Children (God's Children, Our Diocese)

- a perpetrator seeks to join a parish.
- a perpetrator is already a member of the congregation
- a perpetrator leaves the parish
- suspicion / rumours come to light within a parish.

In each of these situations the Priest in Charge and/or PSC must inform the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser (BSA) within one working day. Tel 07342 993 844

Email: StephH@cofebirmingham.com

In the event of an interregnum, it is the responsibility of the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator to ensure this information is communicated to the BSA.

The BSA will advise social services and/or police and/or probation service of the person's relationship with the parish.

The BSA will carry out a risk assessment of the implications for the church and appropriate response

Good Practice Guidelines taken from the Diocesan policy further details available in parish office

Good Working Practice

Treat all children and young people with dignity and respect.

Respect personal privacy

Be sensitive to others.

Be sensitive to a child's wish to opt out of an activity.

Provide access for young people to talk to appropriate others about their problems.

Follow accepted guidelines relating to contact with children and young people.
Challenge unacceptable behaviour. e.g bullying

Plan activities appropriately.

Do not rely on your good name to protect you.

Provide an example for others to follow.

Do not show favouritism to any individual

Remember that your actions may be misinterpreted by others.

Regularly review your work with others

Never exaggerate or trivialize child abuse issues.
Seek support, i.e don't try to deal with everything on your own.

Be aware of inappropriate physical contact.

Response to children who confide in workers

The worker should listen carefully, remembering that a young child may not have the vocabulary to explain clearly what it is that distresses him/her.

If, as a result of what a child has said suspicions are raised about a person, the worker must not try to question him/her themselves.

The child must be taken seriously but this does not mean taking everything the child says as a fact.

DO, listen, take time, take it seriously, reassure the child that he/she is right to tell, be honest with the child, be clear that, in order to help the child, you cannot keep this information to yourself, explain to the child what will happen next, and reassure that you will support them,

Consult and get support, but only from someone who needs to know and who will keep the matter confidential.

It may not be always appropriate to record details as the child is talking but a written record of the conversation should be made as soon as possible after the conversation.

Suggested outline of record,

- Time, setting and those present when conversation took place
- What the child said using his or her own words where possible
- Keep report factual and do not make judgements
- Ensure any opinions expressed by you are identified as such.
- If you have seen injuries sketch where they are and describe them.
- Record how the child was during the conversation, afraid, tearful etc.
- Record any other subsequent incidents or conversations up to the point the child is no longer in your care.
- Remember to date, time and sign all reports.
- Report to the BSA or the Social Services Department.

Don't

- Show shock,
- Try to silence.
- Ask leading questions.
- Keep the secret or agree to keep the secret.
- Jump to conclusions.
- Alert the perpetrator.
- Make promises you can't keep.

How do I respond – what do I say?

- Try to avoid asking, what, why, how, when, where, who?
- Are you sure?
- Why didn't you say before?

Or saying:

- I can't believe it.
- I am shocked.

Try to say

- I'm glad you came to me.
- I'm sorry this has happened.
- I'm going to get help so that this stops happening.
- You have been very brave to tell me.
- You were right to tell me.

Accidents

All accidents should be recorded in the accident books held in the first and lower kitchens within the church centre.

These should not include incidents of a confidential nature.

The accident book should record the date, time and circumstances of any accident or injury, what action was taken and by whom.

Parents should be told and then asked to sign the book to confirm they have been informed.

If the injury is slight a parent/carer should be told when the child is collected.

Physical Contact with Children and Young People

Physical contact with a child or young person by a children's leader should be avoided unless it is essential to ensure the safety and well-being of the child or young person

The following guidelines are recommended both by those who work with children and for other adults who come into contact with children informally.

- Any physical contact should only take place in public.
- Physical contact should reflect the child's needs not the adults.
- Children have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others, except in exceptional circumstances where they need medical attention.
- Any physical activity which is, or may be thought to be, sexually stimulating to the adult or child must be avoided.
- It is appropriate for helpers to monitor one another in the area of physical contact and point out anything which could be misunderstood.
- If a worker persists in inappropriate touch with a young person this must be challenged. If there are concerns about an adult's contact with a young person, advice must be sought from the Priest in Charge and/or the PSC and/or the BSA.

Challenging Behaviour

- Assess what response is appropriate. It May be appropriate to ignore it, delay dealing with it, or deal with it immediately.
- No worker should be isolated.
- Try to calm the situation
Take a deep breath and count to 5.
Take note of their feelings.

Try to engage with the person in a way that does not put them down but helps them work through what is happening.

- Avoid eye to eye and physical contact. Try to negotiate a resolution
- Leaders should meet and debrief after difficult situations. Make a record of what has happened and what was decided should be done about it.
- Inform someone who is outside the situation eg Priest in Charge, PCC rep
- If challenging behavior is persistent support is available from The Church of England – Birmingham Growing Younger Together Team.

Registration

Any activity involving children and young people should have a registration procedure, in case of the need for evacuation procedures, and to be able to contact a parent or guardian.

Guidelines and good practice for photography

Permission must be sought of all the people (parent or person with parental responsibility) who will appear in a photograph, video or web cam image before the footage is recorded. (forms available in parish office)

It must be clear why that person's image is being used

What it will be used for

Who might want to look at the pictures.

If images are being taken at an event attended by large numbers this is regarded as a public area so it is not necessary to get the permission of everyone in the crowd shot but would be sensible to ask permission of those who are in the foreground.

It is recommended that churches and individuals working on behalf of churches do not place photographs of children or young people on the internet in which they can be easily identified. It is advisable to use group shots or scenes.

It is advised not to give any identifying details of a child.

Precautions for internet and mobile phone safety

Children and young people will not have access to computers at St. George's Church Centre unless a responsible person who is password holder is with them.

Passwords will not be issued.

Guidelines for communications by e mail and text messaging

Email – If children's workers are sending emails eg. reminder of future meetings ensure church leaders are aware of this and parents/carers are happy with the arrangement.

Send group emails rather than individual ones.

Text messages – are private by nature, so take care with this medium.
Save text messages as text files to ensure an open record exists.

Staffing ratios

Age Group	Staff	Children
0 – 2 years	1 for every	3
2 -3 years	1 for every	4
3 years +	1 for every	6
5 years +	1 for every	8

Staffing

As far as possible staffing should

- reflect cultural groups
- have both male and female leaders.

Staff should be aware of prejudice and racism, and have access to contact points for advice either through the Priest in Charge or PSC.

Transport

Vehicles used must be taxed.

Vehicles must have a current MOT cert, if applicable.

Drivers to hold a current driving licence.

Insurance for the transportation of children and young people.

Appropriate seat belts/car seats must be used.

It is an offence for under 14 year olds not to be wearing a seat belt in a mini bus.

Mini buses should always have an adult passenger to accompany children and young people.

Protection from Drug Abuse

A statement forbidding illegal drugs in the Church and Centre must be clearly displayed in all areas.

Training in drug awareness is recommended for those who work with children and young people.

Contact Details

Priest in Charge: Rev'd Alison Cozens 07803 433 283

Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator: Rev'd Alison Cozens 07803 433 283

Parish Identity Verifier: Ms Velma Sweeney 07958 059 893

Bishop's Safeguarding Advisor: 07342 993 844

Childline: 0800 1111
Freepost 1111 London N1 0BR

Family Lives: 0800 800 2222

West Midlands Police: 101 (request Child and Adult protection Unit)