

St Mary the Virgin, Lapworth

Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

The PCC (Parochial Church Council) of St Mary the Virgin, Lapworth, recognises the need to safeguard the children, young people and adults in our care. This policy is adopted to guard against any form of abuse by persons acting in the name of our parish.

Policy Framework

This policy implements the expectations of the Church of England for PCCs expressed in:

- 1) Promoting a Safer Church; House of Bishops policy statement (2017)
(This document is readily available online. Search for “Promoting a Safer Church 2017”.)
- 2) Protecting all God’s Children
(Safeguarding policy for children and young people, 4th edition, 2010)
- 3) Promoting a Safe Church (safeguarding policy for adults, 2006)

The PCC also adopts the safeguarding policies and practice guidance of Diocese of Birmingham.

Context

We aim to create a safe environment for the nurture and development of children, young people and adults. We want all people to feel valued and confident to ask for support and help.

We recognize that everyone has different levels of vulnerability and that each of us may be regarded as vulnerable at some time in our lives. As members of this parish we commit ourselves to respectful pastoral care for all to whom we minister. We commit ourselves to the safeguarding of people who may be vulnerable, ensuring their well-being in the life of this church. We commit ourselves to promoting safe practice by those in positions of trust. The parish commits itself to promoting the inclusion and empowerment of people who may be vulnerable.

The Church Building

We commit to providing a safe physical environment. The risk assessment of the building is reviewed annually and approved by the PCC.

A basic first aid kit and accident book is available by the choir vestry door.

We will check that outside organisations using the church premises for activities involving children, young people or vulnerable adults have their own safeguarding policy.

Church Officers

A Church Officer is anyone appointed by or on behalf of the Church to a post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid.

The Parish Safeguarding Coordinator is Claire Hill of 165, Station Lane, Lapworth, Solihull B94 6JH (Tel: 01564 782218). Claire will also act as Parish Domestic Abuse Contact - see the Parish Statement on Domestic Abuse.

The Parish Identity Verifier is Sophie Mathieson of 44, School Road, Hockley Heath, Solihull B94 6RA (Tel: 01564 783267)

Rector acts as the PCC Safeguarding Lead.

Policy on use of Social Media

Use of Social Media on behalf of the Parish must be approved by the PCC. The Parish has a website and parish officers use email and WhatsApp. Recorded services are made available through YouTube. The Rector used to maintain a Twitter account, but has not engaged with this since it became "X". The PCC recognises the potential benefits of communicating with younger people through social media such as Facebook and Instagram, but at present these are not used.

All users of social media on behalf of the parish are accountable to the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator in respect of their usage.

All users of social media on behalf of the parish are made aware of the guidance in section 12 of the Parish Safeguarding Handbook.

Safe Recruitment

We commit to the safe recruitment of all new and current Church Officers who have contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The following assessment has been made of the Church Officer roles in the parish to determine appropriate DBS checks and safeguarding training requirements.

Safe Recruitment Requirements for Church Officers, St Mary's Lapworth

Role	DBS Check	Training	Comment
Rector	Enhanced, regulated	Leadership	Diocesan DBS check
Reader	Enhanced, regulated	Leadership	Diocesan DBS check
Safeguarding Coordinator	Enhanced, regulated	Leadership	
Churchwarden	Enhanced, not regulated	Foundations	
Growing Gifts Leader	Enhanced, not regulated	Foundations	
Junior Choir Leader	Enhanced, regulated	Foundations	
Assistant Junior Choir Leader	Enhanced, regulated	Foundations	
Junior Choir Assistant	Enhanced, regulated	Foundations	
Toddler Praise Leader	Enhanced, regulated	Foundations	
Toddler Praise Assistant Leader.	Enhanced, regulated	Foundations	
Toddler Praise Assistant	Enhanced, regulated	Foundations	
Tower Captain	Enhanced, regulated	Foundations	
Assistant Tower Captain	Enhanced, regulated	Foundations	
PCC member	Enhanced, not regulated	Foundations	
Sides Person	None	Basic Awareness	

DBS checks are made on appointment and renewed every three years. Diocesan procedures will be used.

Safeguarding Training is given on appointment and refreshed every three years. The terms Leadership, Foundations and Basic Awareness refer to different levels of Church of England safeguarding training.

Church Officers will be given clear instructions and information in respect of their role, adequate resources and support and regular opportunities for review.

The PCC has implemented CofE's June 2021 "Safer Recruitment & People Management" document such that all DBS checks are on a three-year cycle. The Role Descriptions and

People Specifications associated with the Activities for Children and Young People specified below have been defined and shared with the relevant people.

Policy Statement on the recruitment of ex-offenders

We are committed to the fair treatment of our current and potential employees, volunteers and office holders, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependants, age, physical/mental disability or offending background.

As an organisation assessing applicants' suitability for positions which are exempt from the Rehabilitations Act 1974 using criminal record checks processed through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), we will comply fully with the *DBS Code of Practice* and *House of Bishops' Safer Recruitment & People Management* guidance.

We are committed to equality of opportunity for all applicants and aim to select people for roles with us based on their skills, abilities, experience, knowledge and, where needed, qualifications and training. We will consider applicants who have a criminal record on their individual merits.

For roles covered by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act we will not ask an applicant to disclose any criminal history that is spent. We will only ask an applicant about their unspent criminal history.

For roles that are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act we will ask applicants to disclose all criminal history, spent and unspent (other than protected cautions and convictions). Where we wish to select the person for the role, we will ask them to apply for a DBS check appropriate to the role.

Where criminal history, or a potential risk of harm, has been disclosed in the recruitment process we will refer this information to the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer for a risk assessment. The Diocesan Safeguarding Officer will advise whether the person may be offered the role. The relevance of the nature of the criminal history to the role applied for will always be assessed and an application will not automatically be refused just because criminal history has been disclosed.

We will only submit an application for a criminal record check to the DBS after a thorough risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the role. For those roles where a criminal record check is identified as necessary, all application forms, adverts and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that an application for a DBS certificate will be submitted in the event of the individual being offered the position.

We will ensure that all those who are involved in the recruitment process have received appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders and eligibility of a role for a criminal record check.

This policy will be made available to all DBS applicants at the start of the recruitment process.

Informing

We commit to informing the whole church community about our safeguarding policy. The policy will be available on the parish website. A copy will be displayed in church. Copies of the policy will be specifically passed to the Church Officers identified above.

We will ensure the children, young people and adults in our care know who they can talk to if they have any concerns. A "Need to Talk" poster will be displayed on the main noticeboard in church, and on the choir noticeboard.

Activities for Children and Young People

The relevant activities are Junior Choir and Baby and Toddler Praise. Risk Assessments and Role Descriptions have been prepared for each of these activities.

The PCC would like to develop activities for children in Bell Ringing and Confirmation Classes. Some children do attend these activities but never without a parent present. Risk Assessments and Role Descriptions will be prepared before these activities are offered to children without their parents present.

Adults working on activities for children and young people should:-

- regularly re-appraise their practices and relationships with young people.
- ensure that relationships are appropriate to the age and gender of the young people involved.
- ensure that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation.
- minimise situations where abuse can occur.

Staffing ratios are recommended as follows:

Age Ratio

0-2 year 1 adult to 3 children
2-3 year 1 adult to 4 children
3-5 year 1 adult to 8 children ,
3-5 year 1 adult to 8 children
5-7 year 2 adults to 20 children
8 year+ 2 adults to 20 children

The activities are planned so that normally no adult is left alone with children or young people.

Volunteers under 18 years will only assist an adult. They will not be left in charge of a group of children

Non-Church Activities for Children and Young People

The PCC authorises Non-Church activities in the church building when these have been organised by Schools or Uniformed Organisations in conjunction with Church Officers. Lapworth CofE Primary School has termly services in church and occasional educational visits. There have been no visits from Uniformed Organisations since the Covid lockdowns.

Activities for Vulnerable Adults

The PCC does not authorise any activities on churches premises that are aimed primarily at Vulnerable Adults.

Responding and Reporting Cases of Abuse

We recognise our responsibility to always respond to and report abuse in whatever context, inside or outside the church environment and will always listen to and take seriously any child, young person or adult who reports that they have been abused.

If there is an immediate danger or if medical attention is required we will immediately call the emergency services 999.

We will always report allegations of abuse and concerns about a child, young person or a vulnerable adult to the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator (unless the allegation is against the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator) and to the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser. The Parish Safeguarding Coordinator understands that safeguarding concerns or allegations must be reported within 24 hours to the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser.

We will always report all allegations of abuse against Church Officers to the appropriate statutory agency and to the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser and co-operate with any investigation.

Serious safeguarding incidents must be reported to the Charity Commission, through the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser and Diocesan Secretary. In accordance with CofE procedures the PCC delegates the reporting responsibility to the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser and the Diocesan Secretary. The PCC appoints the Rector, Churchwardens and Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator as a PCC Trustee Reporting Sub-Group to make any such reports through the Bishop's safeguarding Adviser and Diocesan Secretary, to cooperate with investigations and to report back to the PCC. A member of the Sub Group will not be involved in its discussions if that person is implicated in the serious incident.

We will keep all records in relation to safeguarding concerns, allegations and the recruitment of volunteers and paid workers securely.

Dealing with Known Offenders

We will inform the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser, and ensure appropriate supervision, of anyone who is known to have offended against a child, young person or a vulnerable adult who attends worship or activities organised by the PCC. We will follow all recommendations of the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser in this regard.

Safeguarding Action Plan and Training Plan

The PCC maintains a *Promoting a safer church action plan* through the on-line Safeguarding Dashboard, maintained by the Rector and the Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator. Updated versions of the action plan are to be presented regularly to the PCC. The PCC adopts the action plans.

The PCC has implemented the CofE's April 2021 "Safeguarding Learning & Development Framework". This involves all PCC members and all people with direct contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults completing "Responding well to Domestic Abuse" Training.

Safeguarding Records

Safeguarding records are stored and retained in accordance with the relevant CofE policies and in compliance with GDPR. The Rector maintains a locked fireproof box of records at the Rectory. In the event of a clergy vacancy this box, and the key, will be passed to the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator.

Review

The policy will be reviewed each year to ensure that the policy is working effectively, that the identified Church Officer roles are still appropriate, and to ensure that it meets all current legislation, House of Bishop's and Diocesan policies and practice guidance.

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Approved by the PCC on 18th November 2024.