



WOOLTON HILL CHURCH HALL.

ST. THOMAS' CHURCH

VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY (SAFEGUARDING)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Definitions of Terms

For the purposes of this Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy, all references to:

'the church' - St Thomas' Woolton Hill

'vulnerable adult' – Any adult aged 18 or over who, by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation is permanently or for the time being unable to take care of him or herself, or to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

'workers', 'staff', 'volunteers', 'helpers' are used interchangeably and are taken to refer to anyone interacting with children on behalf of The Church

'abuse' refers to any of the recognised forms of abuse – physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect.

2. WHY WE HAVE A VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY

*A Vulnerable Adult protection policy will help protect **children**.*

A vulnerable adult protection policy helps to create a safe and positive environment for vulnerable adults and, although no procedures or processes can offer complete protection, following these procedures and implementing a policy minimises the risk to vulnerable adults from abuse and exploitation.

*A vulnerable Adult protection policy will help protect **workers**.*

A vulnerable adult protection policy clarifies what The Church requires in relation to the protection of vulnerable adults. It sets out standards of behaviour for project staff and volunteers when they are working with vulnerable adults and what to do if they notice, or are told about, inappropriate behaviour in others.

*A Vulnerable Adult protection policy will help protect **The Church**.*

A vulnerable adult protection policy is a statement of intent that demonstrates The Church's commitment to safeguard vulnerable adults from harm. Vulnerable adult protection policies will help move The Church towards best practice in this area and deter those who would wish to abuse vulnerable adults from seeking to work on behalf of The Church.

2.1. Principles Underlying The Policy

Christian communities should be places where all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse. The Church is particularly called by God to support those at the margins, those less powerful and those without a voice in our society. The Church can work towards creating a safe and non - discriminatory environment by being aware of some of the particular situations that create vulnerability. Issues which need to be considered include both the physical environment and the attitudes of workers.

A person who might be considered vulnerable has the right to:

- be treated with respect and dignity;
- have their privacy respected;
- be able to lead as independent a life as possible;
- be able to choose how to lead their life;
- have the protection of the law;
- have their rights upheld regardless of their ethnicity, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religion or cultural background;
- be able to use their chosen language or method of communication;
- be heard.

3. WHO IS A VULNERABLE ADULT?

All adults can be vulnerable to mistreatment at different times in their life.

Human beings are, by their very nature, subject to the chances and changes of this world frequently with little or no opportunity or ability to influence the things they are subject to.

Each person has strengths and weaknesses, capacities and restrictions. At some time, everyone will be vulnerable to a wide range of pressures, concerns or dangers. No one is 'invulnerable'; some people may consider themselves to be strong but, when circumstances change, strengths can quickly disappear. Some people, by reason of their physical or social circumstances, have higher levels of vulnerability than others.

It is the Christian duty of everyone to recognise and support those who are identified as being vulnerable. In supporting a person experiencing vulnerability we must do so with compassion and in a way that maintains dignity.

Vulnerable adults may therefore be people who have:

- a substantial learning or physical disability;
- a sensory disability;
- a physical disability;
- a mental illness or mental disorder (including dementia), chronic or otherwise;
- a significant reduction in physical or mental capacity;
- a dependency upon others in the performance of, or a requirement for assistance in the performance of basic physical functions;
- severe impairment in the ability to communicate with others;
- impairment in a person's ability to protect him/herself from assault, abuse or neglect;
- failing faculties in old age;
- an addiction to alcohol or drugs;
- a reduction in physical, mental, or emotional capacity brought about by life events;
- any situation which reduces a person's capacity to protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation;
- a person experiencing long term disability or deterioration in health, or caring for someone with physical difficulties;
- a person who is unable to demonstrate the capacity to make a decision and is in need of care and support;
- a recently bereaved person;
- a permanent or temporary reduction in physical, mental or emotional capacity brought about by life events, for example: bereavement; previous abuse or trauma; divorce; birth of a baby; retirement; loss of job; domestic abuse.

This list is not exclusive and the presence of one of these conditions does not necessarily mean a person will be vulnerable. There is no specified age at which 'faculties fail'.

3.1 Staff to Child Ratios

OFSTED prescribes minimum staff-child ratios for those groups which are required to register with it. For those groups not subject to registration these ratios are advisory and should be seen as minimum standards.

0–2 years 1 person for every 3 children

2–3 years 1 person for every 4 children

3–8 years 1 person for every 8 children

Over 8 years 1 person for the first 8 children and then 1 extra person for every extra 12 children

Each group should have a minimum of two adults and it is recommended that a gender balance be maintained if possible.

If a person who has been assigned to help staff a group is prevented from attending at short notice, there is no automatic obligation to cancel the group. It may be possible to secure the services of another suitable person or to make other appropriate temporary arrangements so that the group can still run as scheduled.

3.2 Staff, Volunteers and Helpers

Paid staff appointed to work with children will be recruited according to the principles of safer recruitment set out in the **Safeguarding Guidance for Safer Recruitment**. Church organizations are advised to consult the diocesan children's adviser, youth adviser or safeguarding adviser before embarking on the recruitment process.

Volunteers should also be recruited according to safer recruitment principles, although it will not be necessary to consult the diocesan advisers before recruitment. Only volunteers who have been formally appointed to an appropriate role may take responsibility for children or young people.

Other adults may help with children or young people's groups on an occasional basis but must be accountable to an appointed worker. If they are to join the team on a regular basis they must be properly recruited as above. They will all also be asked to complete a DBS check.

Young people aged 16 or 17 may help with groups but must be supervised by an adult worker and cannot be counted as part of the staffing. They will also need DBS checks if they fulfil requirements. Young people aged under 16 may act as helpers but should not have responsibility for children and must be supervised.

3.3 Support and Supervision

All workers will be provided with appropriate support and supervision within their roles. Support and supervision may come from the Parish or/and the Diocese.

3.4 Registration and Consent Forms

Registration and consent forms are not required for attendance at worship, although if young children regularly attend without their parents, contact should normally be made with a parent. Contact details and special requirements should be noted for all who regularly attend other church activities, such as Sunday schools, youth groups and mixed age activities such as choirs, and registers taken. Consent should be obtained for all activities and should include, as appropriate, consent for making and using appropriate images of children.

3.5 Mixed Age Activities

Care should be taken to ensure that children and young people in mixed-age activities such as choirs, bell ringing and serving are appropriately supervised. It is not possible to request DBS checks for adults in those groups unless they have specific responsibilities for children or young people. In such groups, at least one person as well as the person leading the activity needs to be recruited safely, including a DBS check and to be designated to supervise the welfare of children and young people involved. It may be more convenient to have a team of such people taking responsibility on a rota.

3.6 Touching

Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors. Touch should be instigated by / related to the child's needs, not the worker's. Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the worker. Avoid any physical activity that is, or may be thought to be, sexually stimulating to the adult or the child.

Children are entitled to privacy to ensure personal dignity. Children have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others, except in exceptional circumstances when they need medical attention. When giving first aid (or applying sun cream etc.), encourage the child to do what they can manage themselves, but consider the child's best interests and give appropriate help where necessary.

Team members should monitor one another in the area of physical contact.

Concerns about abuse should always be reported.

3.7 Guidelines for Discipline

Dos and Don'ts of Discipline in Children's Work

Do:

- Lay down ground rules e.g. No swearing, racism or calling each other names, a respect for property.
- Keep the ground rules simple and clear, and make sure the children understand what procedure will be taken if they are not followed.
- Never reject a child, just the behaviour (Tell the child that you value him/her, but you are not willing to accept the behaviour).
- Remember that each child is unique, special and individual, and each child needs a different method of being dealt with. We therefore need to be asking ourselves "Why is the child behaving like that?".
- Work on each individual child's positives, do not compare them with each other, but encourage and build them up.
- Help the child learn that they will be noticed more when they obey the rules, rather than when they break them. Try to create an environment of care and offer more tangible rewards, where each child feels that it is worth keeping to the rules.

Don't:

- NEVER smack or hit a child.
- Discipline out of love NEVER out of anger. (Call on support from other leaders if you feel you may deal with the situation unwisely in your anger).
- Do not shout in anger or put down a child/young person.

3.8 Camps / Residential Activities / Off Site Activities

From time to time activities may be arranged which will take place away from the usual meeting place and may include overnight stays. A comprehensive risk assessment of each activity will be undertaken and appropriate risk management measures put in place.

Parents / guardians will be given full details of all such activities and clear behaviour guidance will be issued to children prior to attending. Separate consent forms would be completed for such activities.

3.9 Bullying

Bullying of any sort will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Any such behaviour will be dealt with and those perpetrating the bullying will be made aware that such behaviour is not acceptable.

Children experiencing bullying in any situation will be offered support to address the issues.

3.10 Transporting Children

Transport, travel or escort arrangements to or from church activities are the responsibility of parents if they make informal arrangements among themselves. They are the responsibility of the PCC if the PCC formally organises them. It should be clearly understood by all concerned at which point responsibility for the child is passed from parent to church officer and at which point it is returned to the parent.

Children and young people should not be taken out with transport without the prior consent of the parents. All those who drive children on Church organised activities should be over 25 and should have held a full driving licence for over two years. Any change to this rule must be agreed by the PCC.

Transport In Private Cars

All cars that carry children should be comprehensively insured. The insured person should make sure that they inform their Insurer that they will be giving lifts to children and young people and that their insurance covers the giving of lifts during church activities. (This should not affect the premium). All cars that carry children should be clean and in a road worthy condition.

Drivers must comply with the law in relation to seat belts, child seats and booster cushions. If there are no seat belts, children should not be given lifts. At no time should the number of children in a car exceed the legal passenger number for that vehicle. If a child is known to have a disability or special need, consideration should be given to whether to have a non-driving adult in the car. This adult should sit in the back, behind the driver with the child in the seat beside him or her.

Any driver who has an endorsement of 6 points or more on their licence should inform the Parish Safeguarding Representative. Any driver who has an "unspent" conviction for a drink driving offence or for Dangerous Driving, or Racing on the Highway, should not transport children.

If in an emergency a driver has to transport one child on his or her own, the child should sit in the back of the car.

All children up to 3 years old must be carried in a child restraint. Rear-facing baby seats must not be used in a seat protected by a front air-bag unless the air-bag has been deactivated manually or automatically. Children from aged 3 up to 135cm in height (approx. 4'5") or their 12th birthday (whichever they reach first) must use baby/child seats, or booster cushions for older children. All passengers aged 13 years or older must wear an adult seat belt if available.

To ensure that these guidelines are adhered to it may be appropriate to get a signed undertaking, covering the above issues, from those people who are prepared to transport children in their cars.

Transport by Mini Bus / Coach

A mini-bus with seat belts must be used. All children must have a proper seat. An escort must always be taken in the mini-bus.

It is compulsory for passengers aged over 13 years to wear a safety belt if provided when travelling in a minibus, bus or coach. The legislation that requires baby/child seats and booster cushions to be used in cars does not apply to minibuses, buses and coaches – i.e. commercial companies do not have to provide this equipment. However, a school or local authority (and therefore assume a church) contracting vehicles to carry children in their care should ensure that the children are provided with a safe journey. It is therefore recommended that only mini-buses with fitted seat belts (both front and rear) may be used, and all children and adults should use the seat belts.

Appropriate arrangements, for example regarding insurance and driving qualifications, should be made by those driving minibuses on behalf of the church. When using a minibus, whether owned, hired or borrowed, all drivers must hold the correct permit on their driving licence or take the appropriate driving test. Drivers with entitlement to drive cars prior to 1 January 1997 (shown as group A, B for automatics on an old style licence or as category B and DI not for hire or reward on a new style licence) can drive a minibus provided they are over 25 and under 70, the minibus has a maximum of 17 seats including the driver's, and is not being used for hire, or reward. This minibus entitlement remains valid in the UK and on temporary visits abroad until the licence is next renewed. When this happens, the minibus entitlement can only be issued by making a special application, which involves meeting higher medical standards. Minibus entitlement is normally renewed for 3 years.

Transporting children on behalf of a church is a regulated activity and DBS checks are required.

3.11 Storage and Use of Images

Specific procedures for the making, storage and use of images of children are available. No image will be taken, stored or used without the parent / carers permission.

3.12 Internet and Email

Modern communication technologies may be used as a means of communicating with parents and children. Only email addresses given for the purpose of communication will be used. No email addresses will be shared with any other organisation without consent.

4. ABUSE

Those working with young people must be aware issues of abuse may be disclosed to them. Although infrequent, these disclosures must never be ignored and must be passed on to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (01962 737317).

4.1 Definitions of Abuse

Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts (oral sex). They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and /or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing, shelter, including exclusion from home or abandonment, failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-takers, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

4.2 Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

Recognising possible signs of abuse

The following signs may or may not be indicators that abuse has taken place, but the possibility should be considered.

Physical Signs of Abuse:

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them.
- Injuries that occur to the body in places that are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.
- Injuries that have not received medical attention.
- Neglect -under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care, etc.
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming.
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains.
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc. which do not have an accidental explanation*.
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse*.

Indicators of Possible Sexual Abuse:

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse.
- Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age-inappropriate sexual play.
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing.
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults.
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home.
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations.
- Eating disorders -anorexia, bulimia*.

Emotional Signs of Abuse:

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws, or becomes clinging.
- Also depression, aggression or extreme anxiety.
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness.
- Obsessions or phobias.
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration.
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults.
- Attention-seeking behaviour.
- Persistent tiredness.
- Running away/stealing/lying.

4.3 Responding to Allegations of Abuse

Under no circumstances should a children/youth worker carry out their own investigation into the allegation or suspicion of abuse. The person in receipt of allegations or suspicions of abuse should:

- Discuss concerns with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (01962 737317).
- Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above. A written record of the concerns should be made in accordance with church procedures and kept in a secure place.
- The PCC will support the Co-ordinator / Deputy Co-ordinator in their role, and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need to know basis.
- All reports or concerns must be treated seriously.

How to Respond to a Child Wanting to Talk About Abuse:

- Above everything else listen, listen, listen.
- Show acceptance of what the child says (however unlikely the story may sound).
- Keep calm.
- Look at the child directly.
- Be honest.
- Tell the child you will need to let someone else know -don't promise confidentiality.
- Even when a child has broken a rule, they are not to blame for the abuse.
- Be aware that the child may have been threatened or bribed not to tell.
- Never push for information. If the child decides not to tell you after all, then accept that and let them know that you are always ready to listen.
- As soon as possible write down what has been shared (see "Making notes").

Do Say:

- You have done the right thing in telling.
- That must have been really hard.
- I am glad you have told me.
- It's not your fault.
- I will help you.

Don't Say:

- Why didn't you tell anyone before?
- I can't believe it!
- Are you sure this is true?
- Why? How? When? Who? Where?
- Never make false promises Never make statements such as "I am shocked, don't tell anyone else".
- Never say 'I can't believe it'.

Concluding:

- Again reassure the child that they were right to tell you and show acceptance.
- Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens (you might have to consider referring to Social Services or the Police to prevent a child or young person returning home if you consider them to be seriously at risk of further abuse).
- Contact the Diocesan Director for Safeguarding and Inclusion or The Church Safeguarding Officer.
- Consider your own feelings and seek pastoral support if needed.

Making Notes:

Make notes as soon as possible, preferably within one hour of the child talking to you. Write down exactly what the child said and when s/he said it, what you said in reply and what was happening immediately beforehand (e.g. a description of the activity). Note if anyone else was present. Record dates and times of these events and when you made the record. Keep all hand-written notes, even if subsequently typed. Such records should be kept for an indefinite period in a secure place.

5. SUPPORT FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY ABUSE

Support to Those Affected Who Have Been Abused

The PCC is committed to offering pastoral care and support to those attending the church who have been affected by abuse.

Support For Those to Whom Abuse Has Been Disclosed

The PCC recognises that those to whom abuse disclosures have been made will need support. Pastoral care and support mechanisms will be put into place with the help of the Director of Safeguarding and their team.

Support For Those Who Have Been Cleared of Abuse Allegations

The PCC recognises that those have been cleared of abuse allegations will need support. Pastoral care and support mechanisms will be put into place with the help of the Director of Safeguarding and their team.

Working With Offenders

When someone attending the church or wishing to join the church is known to have abused children, the PCC will ensure an appropriate Agreement is put in place (where possible the Director for Safeguarding and Inclusion will work with statutory agencies to ensure known risks are identified and included) to supervise the individual concerned and offer pastoral care. The Agreement will detail the conditions under which the person may attend the church.

APPENDICES

Identifying Risk In Youth and Children's Work

A risk assessment takes place when you look carefully at what could be dangerous and possibly cause harm to people, (this is also known as a hazard) and see how this can be prevented. By identifying the danger, you can look at what is already in place to prevent anyone coming to harm, and also look at what else could be done or put in place.

A hazard is anything or anyone that could cause harm e.g. high stacks of chairs, uneven floors, unsafe electrical equipment, blocked fire exits, lack of fire escape signs, missing light bulbs, overfilled cupboards, high shelves, loose carpets, toxic paints, chemicals etc. horseplay, unknown workers (paid or volunteers), working in unsupervised situations, lifts in cars, challenging behaviour, smoking and drinking etc.

A risk is the chance great, or small, that someone will be harmed by the hazard.

Five Steps To Risk Assessment

There are 5 things you need to do to carry out the risk assessment, they are:

Step 1. Identifying Hazards/Dangers:

- Walk round the building/venue looking out for things or situations that could be reasonably expected to cause harm.
- Ask other people about what they think could cause harm.

Step 2. Who Might Be Harmed/Vulnerable and How Could This Happen:

- Young People
- Children with special needs
- Children
- Visitors/Parents
- Activity Leaders/organisers
- Members of the public
- Staff and Volunteers

Step 3. What Are The risks? What Can Be Done To Remove Or Reduce Them?:

- How likely is it that the hazard could cause harm?
- Are there any existing precautions in place? Are they enough?
- What else can be done to reduce the risk, control or remove the hazard/danger?
- Think about how harmful the risk maybe - high, medium or low - both before and after you have taken action to reduce the risk.

Step 4. Write Down Your Findings And What You Need To Do:

The record will show that a proper check has been carried out. Each hazard should be recorded, including an assessment of the risk, recorded as either high, medium or low.

Any action taken should be recorded (next to the hazard), showing the date and the name of the person carrying out the remedial action. Once action has been taken, the level of risk that the hazard presents should be low.

Step 5. Revise And Evaluate Your Risk Assessment Regularly.