St Andrew's Church, Sandon

Policy/Procedure for responding to safeguarding concerns

A safeguarding issue is one where an individual, child or adult, may appear to be at risk of abuse, or may *appear to* present a risk to others. These issues cannot be kept confidential and you should not promise confidentiality to anyone who appears to be at risk.

They have to be raised with your Incumbent, Safeguarding Officer or Church Warden and may have to be reported to statutory authorities.

If the person discloses or discusses matters on which you need to take action, a full note must be made of what it was and what action was taken. The action refers to raising or referring the matter to *anyone* else for discussion and possible escalation.

If the matter is urgent, contact should be made with the police by calling 999 or another statutory agency. A full list is detailed on our website, in the church porch and on the wall in the toilet.

Action can always be taken and information shared if the person reasonably believes that this will help safeguard another person or prevent a crime.

Remember: **RECOGNISE RESPOND RECORD REPORT REFER**

Recognise

1.1.1 Be alert to the signs and symptoms of abuse, by undertaking the required level of training and being familiar with the relevant guidance.

1.1.2 Accept and take seriously what is being said, without displaying shock or disbelief and without investigating or asking leading questions.

Respond

1.2.1 If there is an immediate risk of harm to any individual or urgent medical intervention is needed, report the matter to the police or other emergency services without delay.

1.2.2 Establish whether the person disclosing needs support and record any support needs or wishes expressed by them.

Record

1.3.1 Make a written record of the disclosure and inform the person making the disclosure that is what is being done. The record must be signed by the person receiving the allegation, timed and dated and it must include the location or the means (in person, online, phone call) through which the allegation was received.

Refer

1.4.1 If 1.2.1 does not apply, i.e. there is no immediate risk of harm or urgent medical intervention needed, the matter must be referred to the police or social services and the relevant PSO or Safeguarding Officer within one working day.

1.4.2 In all cases, all records that have been made must be included with the referral.

Further guidance detailed below;

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Responding to an adult raising a safeguarding concern or allegation

It is often very difficult for people to talk about abuse, so it is important to make sure that a safe environment of listening carefully and actively is created, in which a victim/survivor feels able to disclose as much as they can remember. This will help the statutory agencies to investigate the incident as thoroughly as possible.

Do not question beyond checking what has been said. It is the responsibility of Social Care and the Police to investigate. There should be no probing for detail beyond what has been freely given.

People may raise concerns or make allegations about:

- Abuse that happened to them when they were a child or young person;
- Something they've been told by someone else and that they strongly believe is true (disclosure);
- Seeing signs of abuse, such as physical injuries on a child or young person;
- Something they have witnessed that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Where information is given in person, consider the following:

- Adopt a listening style that is compassionate, calm and reassuring. If the information given causes shock, disgust or distress, do not allow these feelings to show. Doing so may inadvertently dissuade the person from giving any further information;
- Listen carefully to that person, but do not ask intrusive or leading questions;
- Stay calm, take what the person raising the concern says seriously, and reassure them;
- Allow the person to continue at their own pace;
- Check with the person to make sure what they actually said has been understood. Do not suggest words – use their words;
- Make no promises that cannot be kept, particularly in relation to confidentiality, but listen carefully to what is being sought in this regard;
- Explain the referral procedures to the person;
- Do not make any comments about the respondent; do not make assumptions or

speculate;

- Be aware that a person's ability to recount their concern or allegation will depend on their age, culture, nationality or any disability that may affect speech or language;
- Avoid statements about your reaction to the information given;
- Do not offer wording or language to the person raising the concern or making the allegation that may affect the way they provide an account. To do so may prejudice any criminal investigation.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility; it is essential to flourishing Christian communities and evidenced through good pastoral care. In the first instance, it is everyone's responsibility to hear a safeguarding concern or allegation which should be passed to your local DSA.

Responding to a child or young person raising a concern or making an allegation

The Church aims to create and maintain a safe environment for children and young people. This includes being open and willing to listen to and respond appropriately to concerns or allegations of abuse they raise concerns. However, avoid intentionally instigating a meeting with a child or young person to receive a disclosure or take a statement from them – that is the role of Children's Social Care and/or the Police.

However, if a child or young person directly discloses about abuse happening to them, the following general guidelines should be adhered to:

- Remain calm;
- Listen to the child or young person carefully and in a manner, that conveys they are being heard and taken seriously;
- Give the child or young person the opportunity to tell their story in their own time;
- Ask questions only for clarification;
- Reassure the child or young person they have done the right thing by telling;
- Do not make promises that cannot be kept;
- Explain to the child or young person what will happen next, i.e. passing the information on to the DSA, explaining to them about the limits of confidentiality, etc.

  It is good practice in this situation, if possible, to have another adult present for the protection of the child or young person and yourself against allegations and to ensure corroboration of any account provided.

Responding to an anonymous concern/allegation

Anonymous complaints are to be handled carefully. Anxiety and fear may persuade some people not to immediately reveal their identity. It is sometimes difficult to act on information under these circumstances, unless at some point the name of the victim/survivor becomes known.

The victim/survivor should be informed that anonymity might restrict the ability of professionals to access information or to intervene to protect a child, young person and/or vulnerable adult. As much openness, as possible should be encouraged. However, if any identifiable information that relates to a safeguarding concern or allegation (current or non- current) is received, it must be passed onto the DSA, who will refer to the appropriate statutory agencies so an investigation can be undertaken to assess the risks, as required.

Responding to someone who admits to abusing a child, young person or vulnerable adult

It is necessary to tell a person who admits an offence against any person that such information cannot be kept confidential. If such an admission is made to you, even where the admission relates to something that happened a long time ago, the matter **must be referred** to the DSA, who will refer to the appropriate statutory agencies so an investigation can be undertaken to assess the risks, as required.

Policy agreed by Parochial Church Council on 4th September 2025

Review date on or before 3rd September 2026