

Parish of St. Benedict's, Bennetts End

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT

The Child Protection Policy Statement of the Church of England states:

The Church of England, in all aspects of its life, is committed to and will champion the protection of children and young people both in society as a whole and in its own community. It fully accepts, endorses and will implement the principles enshrined in The Children Act 1989 that the welfare of the child is paramount. The Church of England will foster and encourage best practice within its community by setting standards for working with children and young people and by supporting parents in the care of their children. It will work with statutory bodies, voluntary agencies and other faith communities to promote the safety and well being of children and young people. It is committed to acting promptly wherever a concern is raised about a child or young person or about the behaviour of an adult, and will work with the appropriate statutory body when an investigation into child abuse is necessary.

The Parish of St. Benedict's, Bennetts End has adopted these principles in its work with children and young people.

1 Introduction

1.1 The objectives of this policy are:

- To ensure the protection of children and young people in the care of the church and of adults who work with children and young people on behalf of the Parochial Church Council (PCC)
- To minimise opportunities for child abuse and the risk of false allegations of abuse

1.2 The guidelines contained in the House of Bishops' Policy Document on Child Protection have been noted in the preparation of this policy.

2 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all groups/activities organised by or on behalf of the PCC which involve children or young people under 18 not remaining within the care of a parent or guardian.

3 Responsibilities

3.1 Responsibilities of the PCC:

- Review Policy and amend as necessary annually
- Monitor implementation of Policy (annual review), with particular reference to the appointment of volunteer workers and maintenance of adequate records
- Provide sufficient resources to ensure the Policy can be carried out
- Provide access to adequate child protection training
- Provide adequate insurance
- Appoint a Parish Safeguarding Officer
- Review Health and Safety Guidelines and amend as necessary annually
- Enforce Health and Safety Guidelines
- Ensure that a system of support and guidance for volunteers and workers is in place
- Communicate the principles of the Policy within the parish
- Promote awareness of the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) and their responsibilities
- Agree and maintain the appointment procedures for people authorised to work unsupervised with children

3.2 Children's Group Leaders Responsibilities

- Identify and notify the Parish Safeguarding Officer of the roles within the church which require approval
- Advise the Parish Safeguarding Officer of any people who will require approval
- Ensure children's activities are established and run in accordance with the Policy

- Ensure that every person has obtained a Disclosure and Barring Service Certificate (DBSC) before beginning involvement in a group.

3.3 Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) Responsibilities

- Ensure that the appointment procedures in relation to child protection are implemented before an appointment is confirmed for anyone who is likely to have unsupervised contact with children
- Complete and keep safely the checklist for all volunteer workers who are approved for unsupervised contact with children
- Present an annual report to the PCC on the implementation of the Child Protection Policy with particular reference to the appointment of volunteer workers approved to have unsupervised contact with children
- Recommend to the PCC any necessary changes to the Child Protection Policy
- Maintain an Incident Book
- Liaise with the Vicar over incidents
- Liaise with the Vicar or designated deputy regarding Disclosures "with convictions and/or other disqualifying behaviour" and any alleged incidents

3.4 Responsibilities of People approved to work unsupervised with Children

- Be familiar with the Policy
- Understand and follow the Child Protection Policy. This includes reporting any abuse discovered or suspected, wherever it occurs, and keeping records of any incidents
- Take advantage of Child Protection training opportunities
- Complete any documentation required under the policy
- Help create a stimulating and safe environment for children

4 Recruitment of Leaders

4.1 Adults volunteering as helpers or leaders of an applicable group will be asked to obtain a Disclosure and Barring Service Certificate. The Parish Safeguarding Officer needs to see the certificate issued before the person commences a position at church. If there are any recorded issues a risk assessment may need to be put in place. Information on all DBSs will be retained by the PSO in a safe place and ensure confidentiality for future reference. The reasons for this requirement and other requirements in this policy will be explained to the volunteer during a preliminary discussion. This will normally be undertaken by a member of clergy and/or the overall co-ordinator of the applicable group.

4.2 The Vicar will decide whether to seek references and/or whether an interview is required. This will be done in consultation with the overall co-ordinator of the applicable group where appropriate.

4.3 Where an interview is deemed necessary this will be undertaken by a panel of at least 3 people, at least one of whom is a member of the PCC.

4.4 Where a decision is made to proceed with recruitment, the Vicar will check whether the volunteer has any convictions for criminal offences against children before the appointment is confirmed. Following this, the volunteer's name will be added to the register.

5 Minimising Risk

5.1 A minimum of two leaders shall be present during meeting times or applicable groups for the duration of an applicable activity.

5.2 Applicable groups should never be left unattended.

5.3 Applicable groups shall maintain a register of attendance.

- 5.4** For each child in attendance a Parental Consent Form shall be signed. (This form includes the option for permission to take photographs for possible use in Parish literature and on the website.)
- 5.5** Written consent shall be obtained from parents/guardians for activities outside the normal meeting of an applicable group.

Categories of Abuse

It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive or definitive list; neither should one single symptom be seen as indicative of abuse. All known facts need to be considered.

SEXUAL ABUSE

This category 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. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

It is almost impossible to recognise symptoms of sexual abuse which will result in abnormal medical conditions. It requires highly experienced medical professionals to diagnose abuse, and recent controversy within the medical profession simply emphasises the difficulties in this highly sensitive area.

Notwithstanding medical symptoms, the child may present as being withdrawn, fearful of adults, show inappropriate sexual knowledge for their age, extreme exposure or preoccupation with genitalia, unexplained sums of money, or gifts.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the need of another person.

It may involve serious bullying causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or exploitation, or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment, though it may occur alone.

It may feature age or development inappropriate to 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 seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another.

It is worthy of note that the issue of domestic abuse, and the negative effects of children living in an abusive household, is now recognised.

It is very difficult to recognise physical signs of emotional abuse but it may manifest itself by the child lacking confidence, as a result of constant criticism, poor interaction between parent and child, developmental delay, communication difficulties, self harming etc.

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 caretakers, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.

Neglect is usually obvious. The child will be inappropriately dressed for the weather conditions, dirty, unkempt, poor personal hygiene, low weight and height for age, poor skin, and hair condition, constant hunger, voracious appetite, hiding food etc.

To emphasise again that what has been previously stated, the indicators of abuse outlined above must not be taken in isolation. The list is not definitive, neither is it exhaustive.

Any concerns around a child or the conduct of an adult towards a child should be reported, as described above to the Parish Safeguarding Officer, the Vicar, or the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor

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Please do not allow this reporting procedure to be delayed. On very exceptional and rare occasions, the need for medical attention or immediate Police attendance may be needed.

6. Dealing with Allegations

- 6.1** All Leaders and helpers must be aware of what action to take if an allegation of abuse is made or if abuse is discovered or if a situation arises with which they are unhappy. See Allegations of Child Abuse: Guidance notes for those working with children and young people.
- 6.2** A written record of all facts and/or details of conversations must be made within 24 hours of their occurrence using the Allegations of child abuse Report Form. This record must be signed and dated and retained in a safe place in case it is required for legal purposes.
- 6.3** The Vicar and Parish Safeguarding Officer and Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor must be informed within 24 hours.

7 Policy Review

- 7.1** The PCC will review this policy and associated procedures annually.