

PROMOTING A SAFER CHURCH

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS: POLICY, PROCEDURE AND GUIDANCE

PARISH OF HERTFORD ST ANDREW

This Policy and Procedure was adopted at a

Parochial Church Council meeting held on May 11th 2026

It follows and is consistent with the Church of England House of Bishops' "Protecting All God's Children" 4th edition 2010, Promoting a Safer Church 2017: Safeguarding Policy of the Church of England and Church of England Practice Guidance: Safer Recruitment (2016)

Rev. Alan Stewart

Rev. Alan Stewart

Each person who works with children and adults who may be vulnerable will agree to abide by this policy.

It will be reviewed annually, accepted and written in the minutes of the PCC

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Introduction

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) takes seriously its collective responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and adults who may be vulnerable.

In accordance with the Church of England Safeguarding Policy our church is committed to:

- Promoting a safer environment and culture and creating a safe and caring place for all.
- Have a named Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) to work with the incumbent and the PCC to implement policy and procedures.
- Safely recruit, train and support all those with any responsibility for children, young people and adults to have the confidence and skills to recognise and respond to abuse.
- Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation.
- Take steps to protect children and adults when a safeguarding concern of any kind arises, following House of Bishops guidance, including notifying the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) and statutory agencies immediately.
- Listen to and take seriously all those who disclose abuse.
- Offer support to victims/survivors of abuse regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred.
- Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons.
- Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons.
- Care for and monitor any member of the church community who may pose a risk to children and adults whilst maintaining appropriate confidentiality and the safety of all parties.
- Ensure that there is appropriate insurance cover for all activities involving children and adults undertaken in the name of the parish.
- Display in church premises and on the Parish website the details of who to contact if there are safeguarding concerns or support needs.

The PCC:

- Review the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Practices at least annually.
- Ensure that health and safety policy, procedures and risk assessments are in place and that these are reviewed annually.
- Will undertake to maintain a register of all people working with children, young people and vulnerable adults within this Parish and that they will have completed the DBS disclosure as required by the Diocese of St Albans and its umbrella organisation, Thirtyone:eight - <https://thirtyoneeight.org/>
- Will authorise children's youth and vulnerable adults' activities carried out on behalf of the PCC on a regular basis.

For the purposes of this document

- A child is anyone under the age of eighteen years or 25 years for those with Special Education Needs & Disabilities (SEND)
- An adult is defined as vulnerable when they are in receipt of a 'regulated activity' in relation to vulnerable adults.
- Safeguarding referral covers
- Neglect/acts of omission
- Self-neglect
- Domestic Abuse
- Spiritual Abuse
- Psychological/emotional
- Financial/Material
- Sexual
- Modern Slavery
- Discriminatory (including hate crime)
- Physical
- Organisational

Copies of the following documents are held on the Church GoogleDrive:

- Promoting a Safer Church – The Church of England's Safeguarding Policy for children, young people and adults (2017)
- Code of Safer Working Practice with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults
- Key Roles and Responsibilities of Church Office Holders and Bodies – Oct 2017
- Delegation by PCC of Responsibility for Reporting Serious Safeguarding Issues to the Charity Commission

New House of Bishops Guidance came into effect in July 2022 and can be found at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual/safeguarding-children-young-people-and-vulnerable-adults-1>

Additional documents produced by the Church of England which can be found on their website:

- Parish Safeguarding Handbook (2019)
- Promoting a Safer Church (safeguarding for children, young people and adults) 2017
- Responding well to Domestic Abuse policy (2017)
- Safer Recruitment and Practice Guidance (2021)
- Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework (2021)
- Responding Well to victims and survivors of abuse (2021)
- Responding well to victims of sexual abuse (2011)
- Responding to, assessing and managing Safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers (2017)
- Practice Guidance: Responding to Safeguarding Concerns or Allegations that relate to Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Guidance (2018)

For advice on all safeguarding issues including allegations or suspicions of abuse contact:

PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER (PSO)

Julie Hollings: 07968 847539 julie.hollings@icloud.com

DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING ADVISER (DSA)

Jeremy Hirst 01727 818107 or 07867 350886 Email: safeguarding@stalbans.anglican.org

DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING ADVISER (DSA)

Martyn Headley 01727 818106 or 07391 010033

POLICY

This policy will be implemented on behalf of the PCC by the Safeguarding Team (Parish Safeguarding Officer, Church Wardens, Youth Worker and the Incumbent).

We (the PCC and Safeguarding Team) recognise that:

- The welfare of the child or adult is paramount
- Everyone has different levels of vulnerability; we will respond and support accordingly based upon the individuals needs and circumstances.
- Each of us may be regarded as vulnerable at some time in our lives
- All children and adults who may be vulnerable (regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity) have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse which can occur in all families and communities
- Domestic abuse if witnessed or overheard by a child, is a form of child abuse by the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour
- Working in partnership with children, their parents, adults who may be vulnerable, their carers and other agencies is essential in promoting their welfare.

We will develop a safeguarding culture in our church that:

- Enables and encourages concerns to be raised and responded to openly and consistently and protects children and adults who may be vulnerable from actual or potential harm
- Is child-friendly and ensures that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse
- Values, listens to and respects children and adults who may be vulnerable, encouraging them to be active contributors to the church community

When concerns are raised we will:

- Respond without delay to every concern raised that a child, or adult, who may be vulnerable may have been harmed, or may be at risk from harm, through abuse, harassment or bullying
- Work with the DSA and the appropriate statutory bodies during an investigation into abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the church community
- Challenge any abuse of power especially by anyone in a position of trust

If abuse has occurred, we will ensure in partnership with the DSA and other agencies that:

- Informed and appropriate pastoral care is offered to any child, young person or adult
- who has suffered abuse, including support to make a complaint if so desired
- Support is provided for any member of our church community known to have offended against a child or vulnerable adult, or those that pose a risk to them.
- We support a known offender or person who poses a risk to a suitable ministry not involved with children or adults who may be vulnerable
- Appropriate pastoral care is offered to any member of our church community against whom an allegation is made

Care of Survivors of abuse and their families

- We will seek to work with anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate support of informed pastoral care.

Role of the Parish Safeguarding Officer

- To work with the incumbent and the parochial church council (PCC) to implement policy and procedures. The PSO must ensure that any concerns about a child or the behaviour of an adult are appropriately reported both to the statutory agencies and to the diocesan safeguarding children adviser.
- The PSO should either be a member of the PCC or have the right to attend the council and should report at least annually on the implementation of the policy within the parish;
- Display in church premises where children's activities take place, the contact details of the coordinator or children's advocate, along with the 'ChildLine' telephone number;
- Ensure that all those authorized to work with children are appropriately recruited according to safer recruitment practice, and are trained and supported;
- Ensure that there is appropriate insurance cover for all activities involving children undertaken in the name of the parish;
- Review the implementation of the safeguarding children policy, procedures and good practice, at least annually;

Safer Recruitment (please also refer to our Safer Recruitment policy)

It is the duty of the PCC (Parochial Church Council) and the Safeguarding Team to ensure that suitable persons are appointed to work with vulnerable persons on behalf of the church and that they:

- Have a clear understanding of what is expected of them.
- Have been duly accredited and their appointment recorded.

General Support

It is the duty of the PCC to ensure that the facilities provided for an activity to be undertaken do not place vulnerable persons or the leaders in charge of them liable to interference by third parties. Where it is reasonably practicable, there should be at least two adults present supervising children, and the PCC should ensure that sufficient support is available to avoid any need to leave a vulnerable person alone, or with only one responsible person present.

Should leaders require assistance or have concerns about the equipment or facilities available they should advise a churchwarden.

The church must:

- Exercise care when appointing leaders/carers to work with vulnerable people.
- Take precautions to see that vulnerable persons are not subjected to abuse.
- Recognise that leaders may in the course of their work suspect that someone in their charge is being subjected to abuse by others.
-

Requirements for Prospective Employee/Volunteers

People who work (paid or unpaid) with vulnerable persons as part of their contribution to church life and activities will be asked to:

- Sign a declaration concerning whether they have ever been convicted of a criminal offence.
- Meet informally with a member of the Safeguarding Team to discuss their suitability for the work being undertaken. This will be confidential.
- Conduct their work in a safe and responsible manner and also take due care that the vulnerable persons in their charge are not subjected to the risk of misconduct by others.

Procedure

The person applying or volunteering to work with vulnerable persons must be given an explanation of the responsibilities placed on them by the Children Act (1989).

An informal meeting will then be arranged with members of the Safeguarding Team to:

- Consider what the volunteer/applicant will be expected to do.
- Review their credentials and experience, and any health problems that may affect their suitability for the task.
- Agree a description of the work to be undertaken and to whom they will be responsible.
- Consider how long the probationary period/and or review should be and what future training might be appropriate.
- Explain the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) form.

Provided the Safeguarding Team agree that the volunteer/applicant is suitable, they will be appointed subject to DBS clearance and the satisfactory completion of a probationary period working under supervision as agreed at the meeting with the Safeguarding Team.

- All church workers working with children and adults will complete and sign an application form and confidential declaration.
- Written references and identification will be required and will be carefully checked.
- A criminal disclosure will be required in relation to all eligible roles. See 'Safer Recruitment and People Management' (Church of England Guidance)
- All church workers working with children and adults will be interviewed in relation to a role/job description or person specification.
- After appointment support and training will be offered
- A member of the Safeguarding Team shall meet informally with each person appointed to work with vulnerable persons to see how work is progressing and to ensure that appropriate support and training is being given.

Those who pose a risk to children

We will consult with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, so that a safe course of action can be implemented as soon as possible if and when it is known that a member of the congregation, or someone wishing to join the congregation, has sexually abused a child or young person, or is not a sexual offender against children but nevertheless may pose a risk. This is in accordance with and so that recommended Church of England procedures can be pursued in conjunction with the relevant statutory agencies.

Responding to a child or adult who may be disclosing abuse

Allegations or Suspicions of Abuse

It is expected that all vulnerable persons who come into contact with Hertford St Andrew will receive care and attention and not be exposed to risk of harm. We adhere to the Diocese of St Albans Best Practice Guidelines (copy on the noticeboard by the church office).

If any member of the church should become suspicious or aware of an allegation of abuse towards a vulnerable person it is their duty to inform The Parish Safeguarding Officer, The Vicar, or The Bishop's Representative for Child and Vulnerable Persons.

Allegation of a suspicion **MUST** be taken seriously. If it is made by a child or vulnerable adult the allegation should be listened to without interruption and as soon as possible a note made of the statement including:

- The time.
- The location.
- The names of other people present when the allegation is revealed.

Such information may be used for legal purposes. The church will **NOT** undertake investigations but act as a reporting agency. The incumbent or other responsible person will inform the Bishops Representative for Child Protection of any allegation of abuse.

We will endeavour to:

- Listen carefully, take the child or vulnerable adult seriously
- Tell the child s/he has done the right thing by telling
- Clarify if necessary
- Say if we can what we will do next
- Make an accurate record as soon as possible of all conversations
- Refer all records to Parish Safeguarding Officer

We will not

- Do nothing
- Promise confidentiality
- Investigate
- Ask leading questions
- Repeatedly question/ask the child or adult to repeat the disclosure over and over

Imminent risk

If we encounter a situation where the child or adult is in imminent danger, we will act immediately to secure the safety of the child or adult. We will seek the assistance of the police and then make a referral to Hertfordshire Children's Services or Hertfordshire Adult's Services in accordance with the Child and Adult Protection Procedure below. If a child or adult needs emergency medical attention, we will seek this immediately and directly from the emergency services. We will keep parents or carers, if available and safe

Record Keeping and Storage

Notes will be made of all safeguarding incidents involving children or adults using our standard forms. They will be treated confidentially and will be securely stored by the vicar or designated person. They will be retained even if the information received was judged to be malicious, unsubstantiated or unfounded. During an interregnum, the designated person will be responsible for all safeguarding records which will be passed to the incoming vicar.

Safeguarding children and adults training

The Parish will make every effort to ensure that clergy, licensed workers, lay ministers, volunteers and employees working with children and adults who may be vulnerable regularly seek and obtain safeguarding training to the level of their responsibility every three years. Clergy must attend the Diocesan Safeguarding Children Basic Awareness /Refresher training once every three years.

Safer Practice with children – *please refer to our Code of Practice*

We will ensure our work with children is carried out in a ‘safe’ environment in accordance with our Code of Practice. Copies will be made available to all those working with children and vulnerable adults and a hard copy is kept in the church office.

Unaccompanied Children – *please refer to our Code of Practice*

If children attend our church services without their parents’ or carers’ knowledge we will welcome the child(ren) and try to establish whether their parents are aware of where they are. We will make sure an adult recruited for work with children takes care of the child and try to discover when they are due home and encourage them to keep to that arrangement. Depending on the age and competence of the child, we will ring the parents or ask the young person to ring to gain the parents’ consent to the child remaining. If the child comes regularly, we will endeavour to establish regular contact with the parents or carers and to discuss with the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Visiting adults who may be vulnerable, in their homes or residential homes - *please refer to our Code of Practice*

Church workers will always complete an assessment of risk before visiting someone in their own home. They will always carry a mobile phone on a home visit, and ensure that someone knows where they are and when they are expected to return. They will always call by appointment and carry identification. Where our workers need to refer the person to another agency we will talk this through with the vulnerable adult, seeking his/her permission or with their family or carers before passing on personal information. Our workers will always endeavour to be clear about what behaviour from the adults who may be vulnerable is acceptable and what is not.

Organisations hiring Church Building or Premises

In relation to all activities and events which are not run directly by the church but which take place in church buildings or grounds the responsibility for implementing safeguarding policies rests with the hiring organisation and not with the PCC. However, the PCC needs to take reasonable steps to ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are being practised by the hiring organisation. The PCC will require visiting groups to ensure that children and adults who may be vulnerable are protected at all times, follow safe recruitment procedures, and are aware of health and safety issues in the building.

Social Media and Engaging with Young People – *please refer to our Code of Practice*

Appendix 1

Child and Adult Safeguarding referral procedure

Emergency situations - *most situations are not emergencies.*

We will follow the following procedure where there is concern that a child or vulnerable adult has been harmed as a result of abuse and urgent action is needed

1. If a child or adult is in immediate danger or requires immediate medical attention call the emergency services. If there are concerns about their immediate welfare, don't delay, call Children or Adult Services and inform the Parish Safeguarding Officer or Vicar or Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor.

Non-emergency situations

2. If there is concern that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of harm, complete a record sheet, and discuss your concerns with your ministry leader, who will seek advice from the Parish Safeguarding Officer or Vicar. They will guide you and seek advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) or Hertfordshire Children's Services, Hertfordshire Adult Services or Police non-emergency 101 if appropriate. If you are unsure about what to do consult with the Parish Safeguarding Officer or Vicar; **do not do nothing.**

If the vicar is implicated, inform the Parish Safeguarding Officer and Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor immediately.

Referrals to external agencies are only made with the support of the Parish Safeguarding Officer or Vicar unless in an emergency (see above).

3. When making a referral to Hertfordshire Children's Services or Hertfordshire Adult Services, make it clear from the first point of contact that you are making a child or adult protection referral.

4. Describe the event or disclosure and give information about the child and family or adult for example the child/adult's name, date of birth, address, telephone number and GP if known. You can choose to remain anonymous when making a referral.

5. Follow up your telephone call with a completed referral form (sometimes available on the Local Authority web site) or letter. This should be acknowledged. If it is not, chase it.

6. Remember that the child and family should, wherever possible, be informed about and consent to the referral **unless this would put the welfare of the child or vital interests of the adult who may be vulnerable, or another person at further risk. *If you have concerns, the absence of consent should not prevent a referral.*** Say if you do not want your details disclosed to the family.

7. For out of hours referrals, call Hertfordshire Children's Services or Hertfordshire Adult Services or where urgent, the Police.

Do not delay your referral. Clergy and Diocesan Officers are NOT authorised to investigate any allegations and must never attempt to do so. Only the Police and the Local Authorities are granted such powers in law.

Appendix 2

Who to Contact if where there is worry about a child or adult

	Contact Number
<u>CHILDREN</u> Hertfordshire Children's Services (also available out of hours)	0300 123 4043
<u>ADULTS</u> Hertfordshire Adult Services	0300 123 4042
POLICE 24hrs	101 or 999 if urgent

Local Safeguarding Board link

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/healthsoc/childfam/childprotection/hertssafboard/

ChildLine	0800 1111
NSPCC Freephone National Helpline	0808 800 5000

DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING OFFICER 01727 818107 or 07868 350886

safeguarding@stalbans.anglican.org