



## What is Safeguarding?

At one time or another we are all vulnerable and may struggle to protect ourselves from harm caused by others. Everyone in the church community has a responsibility to ensure there is a welcome for all people and a responsibility for the safety, well being and protection of others.

### **Safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk is the responsibility of everyone.**

The Church works with statutory agencies to help safeguard children, young people and adults at risk. Since its first child protection policy, and before, the Church has taken the view that matters which are the subject of statutory provisions should be brought to the relevant agencies for determination. This is particularly important if there is a possible need for statutory action to protect a child or adult, or to bring an alleged offender to justice.

### **What is Safeguarding?**

Safeguarding is about more than the child and adult protection systems. It is about preventing harm to children and adults wherever possible and acting to promote their wellbeing - sometimes this will require the use of the child and adult protection systems to address concerns, make someone safer and bring an offender to justice.

#### **Safeguarding and Promoting the welfare of children<sup>1</sup>**

This definition of safeguarding as it applies to children in England.

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances.

#### **Safeguarding Adults at Risk<sup>2</sup>**

Safeguarding means protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted including, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action.

<sup>1</sup> Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2015, DfE [www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk](http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance#safeguarding-1>

## **Who do we safeguard?**

Churches should be safe places for everyone. However some people may be more vulnerable to harm than others- we need to pay particular attention to those people.

**All Children:** There is no single law that defines the age of a child across the United Kingdom. In England statutory guidance “Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2015” refers to anyone who has not yet reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday as a child. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK government in 1991, states that a child “*means every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.*”

All children are vulnerable to harm caused by others: they are reliant on adults to meet their basic needs, they are taught in most cases to respect and trust adults, they have limited independent access to public services.

**Adults at Risk:** Adults may be vulnerable to harm at various points in their lives. We may become vulnerable for a while and then less so through situational issues, ill health, disability or other causes.

There are a number of definitions of a ‘Vulnerable Adult’. The Care Act 2014 came into force in April 2015 and contains the following definition of a vulnerable adult:

*“The safeguarding duties apply to an adult who:*

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs)*
- is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect*
- as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect”*

(Chapter 14 Care and Support Statutory Guidance February 2017)

Some adults will be at risk of harm but may not come under the definitions above; they may still need support but this may not be obtained through local authority adult protection systems.

There is a different definition used by the Disclosure and Barring service.

## **What increases a person’s vulnerability?**

Vulnerability is not an absolute in adults; an individual cannot be labelled as ‘vulnerable’ in the same way as a child is regarded as such. Childhood is absolute: someone who is not yet 18 years of age is a child; this is not the case with vulnerability.

Some of the factors that increase vulnerability include:

A sensory or physical disability or impairment	A physical illness
A learning	Mental ill health
An addiction to alcohol or drugs	Frailty due to increasing age

## **What is Abuse and Harm?**

The words harm and abuse are both often used; they mean similar things. Abuse is defined in Working Together 2015 as: “A form of maltreatment of a child. 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 others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.” (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2015, p.92)

## **Harm and Significant Harm**

Harm is what results from mistreatment or abuse. Harm means ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development, including, for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children, and gives local authorities a duty to make enquiries (S.47) to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child who is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. Significant harm is defined under sections 31(9) and (10) of the Children Act 1989 as amended by the Adoption and Children Act 2002:

*“Where the question of whether harm suffered by a child is significant depends on the child’s health or development. The health or development shall be compared with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child”.*

However, we must respond to any concern that a vulnerable person has been or may be harmed. By reporting our concerns early, we may avoid ‘significant harm’ ever happening. Faith Communities are specifically named in the guidance related to safeguarding adults and children as key partners in preventing and reporting harm and abuse:

*“Workers across a wide range of organisations need to be vigilant about adult safeguarding concerns in all walks of life including, amongst others in health and social care, welfare, policing, banking, fire and rescue services and trading standards; leisure services, **faith groups**, and housing.”* (Chapter 14 Care and Support Statutory Guidance October 2014)

Whilst Local Authorities have a statutory duty to intervene where significant harm has occurred, they can and do offer a whole range of support to prevent and minimise harm.

## **Please see the Categories and Definitions table for information on types of abuse and harm below.**

Further information on each of the types of abuse and the forms in which they may occur is available in the Church of England Safeguarding policies:

- Protecting All God’s Children 2010 (Safeguarding Children)
- Promoting a Safer Church 2006 (Safeguarding Adults)

These policies are available at:

(<https://www.bristol.anglican.org/safeguarding-resources/#policies>)

Please See <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/safeguarding-concern/> for advice on how to raise a concern.

<b>Document Control Information</b>		
Document Issued By	Leanne Smith	Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser
Document Issued Date	December 2014	
Review Frequency	Annual	
Last Review	April 2017	
Changes at Last Review	Included specific definitions of safeguarding as it applies in statutory guidance to children and adults respectively Updated weblinks due to change in website	
Next Review Due	July 2018	