



## Supporting Safeguarding

### Diocese of Bristol Safeguarding Policy for children and adults

The care and protection of children and vulnerable adults involved in Church activities is the responsibility of the whole Church. Everyone who participates in the life of the Church has a role to play in promoting a Safer Church for all.

The Diocese of Bristol, its Bishops, Clergy and leaders are committed to safeguarding as an integral part of the life and ministry of the church. Working within the principles of the House of Bishops Policy for Safeguarding (contained within 'Protecting All God's Children 2010'<sup>1</sup>), the requirements of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015<sup>2</sup>, and the Care Act 2014, care and support statutory guidance, 2016<sup>3</sup>.

This policy applies to all church bodies and church officers within the Diocese of Bristol. Every person has a value and dignity which comes directly from their creation in God's own image and likeness. Christians have a duty to value, understand and respect the rights of children and adults as people of faith in the life of the church.

In accordance with the House of Bishops policy Statement 'Promoting a Safer Church, 2017'<sup>4</sup> the Diocese of Bristol is committed to:

- **Promoting a Safer Environment and culture**
- **Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church**
- **Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation**
- **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**
- **Responding to those that may present a risk to others**

#### **Promoting a Safer Environment and culture**

The safeguarding and protection of children and adults at risk is the responsibility of everyone within a church community. The church community, including all its members, must be alert to risks and dangers and be prepared to report concerns and take action as and when necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/protecting-all-gods-children/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/promoting-safe-churches/>

The child's welfare is the paramount<sup>5</sup> consideration in matters of private and public law. The Diocese of Bristol will apply this principle in all areas of its work undertaken with children. Where a conflict of interest occurs between the welfare of children and that of adults, it is the welfare of children that will be the clear priority.

(See **Role of the Parish Safeguarding Officer**<sup>6</sup> and **Parish Safeguarding Responsibilities**<sup>7</sup>).

### **Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church**

The Diocese of Bristol is committed to implementing safer recruitment practice in the recruitment of all Church officers (ministers, volunteers and employees) and accepts and follows the Church of England Safer Recruitment Policy 2016<sup>8</sup>. A key element of safer recruitment practice includes effective use of references and role outlines/descriptions as well as use of the Disclosure and Barring Service when required. The suitability of an individual, whether paid or volunteer, to work with children or adults at risk is never solely dependent on the outcome of a DBS check. Those who work with children and/or adults, and those who supervise those workers as well as those in positions as trustees (i.e. PCC members), who are eligible for a DBS check will be required to undertake that check prior to starting in any role whether employed or voluntary within the Diocese of Bristol as well as the complete Safer Recruitment process.

Those who are working in a role that is not eligible for a DBS check will be recruited in line with Safer Recruitment practice including the use of applications forms, references and interview where applicable.

Suitable induction, training and supervision will be provided to all those working with children and vulnerable adults.

(See **Safer Recruitment Toolkit and Guidance**<sup>9</sup> and **Fair Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy**<sup>10</sup> and **Handling of Disclosure Information**<sup>11</sup>).

### **Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation**

The Diocese of Bristol accepts that it has responsibilities, through its workers, to take all reasonable steps to safeguard children and adults at risk when on church grounds, taking part in church led activities off site and when traveling between sites when organised by the Church. The Diocese of Bristol cannot be responsible for incidents or concerns arising outside of church or church led activities but will, nevertheless, endeavour to provide appropriate advice and to refer any concern raised to the appropriate authorities in order to ensure that the community as a whole is safeguarded appropriately.

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<sup>5</sup> S.1 Children Act 1989

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/role-parish-safeguarding-officer/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/parish-safeguarding-responsibilities/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/c-e-safer-recruitment-2016/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/safer-recruitment-guidance-and-toolkit-2017/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/recruitment-ex-offenders/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/handling-disclosure-information/>

Anyone who brings any safeguarding suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation of current or non-current abuse to the notice of the church will be responded to respectfully and in a timely manner in line with statutory child<sup>12</sup> and adult<sup>13</sup> safeguarding procedures

The Diocese of Bristol will publish a process detailing how concerns should be reported and managed and require parishes to utilise this process, this will be in line with the Church of England guidance 'Responding to, assessing and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers, 2017' (See '**Allegations Management Procedure**',<sup>14</sup>).

All suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations that reach the required threshold for reporting to the statutory authorities will be reported via the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser to the appropriate statutory authority<sup>15</sup>. The Diocese of Bristol and all church officer therein will fully co-operate with the statutory authorities in all circumstances.

Where allegations of abuse concern church officers the Diocese of Bristol will always act in accordance with the requirements of criminal, civil and ecclesiastical law: respecting and upholding the rights and safeguards within the law as they apply to both individuals who are victims/ survivors of abuse and individuals who are subject of concerns or allegations relating to abuse.

The Diocese of Bristol does not (and should not) investigate current allegations of abuse or harm of children itself but refers them to the appropriate statutory authorities for investigation in line with multi agency safeguarding children procedures. The Diocese may complete internal investigations once statutory authorities have completed their own investigations.

The Diocese of Bristol will only investigate allegations of harm or abuse of a vulnerable adult where a statutory authority requests that this action is undertaken or where the allegation does not meet the criteria for a referral to police or Local Authority. The Diocese of Bristol may make inquiries to gather information in order to be able to provide accurate information to the relevant statutory authorities.

If it comes to the attention of the Diocese of Bristol that a child has experienced abuse in the past that information will always be passed to the statutory authorities.

If it comes to the attention of the Diocese of Bristol that an adult has experienced abuse in their past, the adult's wishes will be taken into consideration and that adult encouraged to report the matter to the statutory authorities. Where there is a reasonable belief that others may be at risk of harm the Diocese of Bristol will refer the matter to the statutory authorities within the guidance provided by the Data

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<sup>12</sup> South West Child Protection Procedures – [www.swcpp.org.uk](http://www.swcpp.org.uk)

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/allegations-management-procedure/>

<sup>15</sup> Police, Local Authority Designated Officer, Children's Social Care or Adult Safeguarding Team

Protection Act 1998 (see '**Safeguarding Records practice guidance**'<sup>16</sup> and '**information sharing flowchart**'<sup>17</sup>).

The Diocese of Bristol has a clear line of accountability and structure for safeguarding which attributes roles and responsibilities to everyone within the life of the church. This includes the Diocesan Secretary holding lead responsibility for Safeguarding within the Bishops Staff group, having a suitably qualified Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser in post and the presence and work of the Diocesan Safeguarding Steering Group (see '**DSSG - Terms of Reference**'<sup>18</sup>).

***We will seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust.***

The Diocese of Bristol is aware that those in positions of trust and responsibility, in the Church, as elsewhere, may be subject to temptation to abuse their power and exploit or harm others. We seek to take action to deal with any abuse.

Allegations of abuse or misconduct in relation to children (under 18) by church officers will be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), as well as other statutory bodies as appropriate, and investigated in accordance with his/her advice.

Allegations of abuse or misconduct in relation to adults (18 and over) by church officers will be referred to the police and/or Local Authority where appropriate and investigated in accordance with their advice. Where appropriate allegations of this nature will be managed according to the Church of England 'Responding to, assessing and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers, 2017' and or the appropriate disciplinary and or complaint procedures.

### **Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons**

The Diocese of Bristol will always endeavour to offer care and support to all those that have been abused, regardless of the type of abuse, where it occurred or by whom it was perpetrated.

The Diocese of Bristol, in conjunction with the Church as a whole is committed to continuing to learn how best to respond in a supportive, sensitive and healing way to needs to those who have suffered and experienced abuse.

Anyone who has suffered and experienced abuse within the church will be listened to, taken seriously and treated with compassion. They will be offered appropriate pastoral care, counselling and support – according to the agreed need.

Disclosures of abuse will be responded to effectively by the Diocese of Bristol and in accordance with House of Bishops guidance, Responding to, assessing and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers, 2017.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/safeguarding-records-practice-guidance/>

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/dssg-terms-reference/>

For other affected parties (Family, Parish, congregation etc.) an appropriate pastoral response from the Diocese of Bristol will be considered, with due regard to the right to privacy of all directly involved and the administration of justice.

The Diocese of Bristol accepts the guidance provided in the House of Bishops document “Responding Well to those who have been sexually abused, 2011<sup>19</sup>” and will provide access to training for all those carrying the Bishops licence in order to inform their response to survivors of abuse. The Diocese of Bristol will train, support and make available Authorised Listeners so that those who survive abuse can be heard and supported

### **Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons**

Where it comes to the Attention of the Diocese of Bristol or one of its Parishes, that a Church officer (including the Clergy) is subject of an allegation of abuse or there are concerns regarding their suitability to work with children or adults at risk of abuse, the Diocese or Parish will respect their rights under criminal, civil and ecclesiastical law. There will remain a legal presumption of innocence during the statutory or internal church inquiry processes. Those who are the subject of allegations or concerns maybe asked to voluntarily step down or in some circumstances, suspended, from their role whilst the necessary inquiries and investigations are completed by statutory authorities or the Church. Additional assessment, therapeutic support and pastoral support services will be offered.

Where there are concerns regarding a Church officer who is considered to pose a risk to children or vulnerable adults the Diocese of Bristol will take the necessary steps to protect others. This maybe done by working to mitigate any identified risks through a safeguarding agreement with the church officer.

Church Officers who are subject of concerns or allegations of abuse also belong to a family, congregation and wider church community. The Diocese of Bristol will remain mindful of the need to provide support to members of families, parishes and congregations who are also affected by an allegation against a church officer.

### **Responding to those that may present a risk to others**

The Church based on the message of the Gospel, opens its doors to all. It will therefore endeavour to offer pastoral care and support to any member, or anyone who seeks to become a member of a church community whom may present a risk of harm to others due to:

- having a conviction or caution for offences against children or vulnerable adults or
- who has been barred or prohibited in some way from working with children or adults.
- Or is considered to present a risk to either group but the outcome of an investigation is as yet unknown

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/responding-well/>

Where an individual comes to the attention of the Diocese of Bristol we will seek to implement a Safeguarding agreement, where it is safe to do so in line with advice from the local Statutory Agencies. Any agreement will contain safeguards for the individual and children and/or adults at risk and the Parish.

The Diocese of Bristol will work with statutory authorities where appropriate to ensure adequate risk assessment and management of any agreement are consistently implemented (see ‘**Ministering to those that may present a risk**<sup>20</sup>’).

***In all these principles we will follow legislation, guidance and recognised good practice.***

Consequently this policy and all following procedures and guidance will be regularly reviewed and updated in order to reflect current legislation, guidance and best practice.

The Diocese of Bristol is committed to positive information sharing practice including appropriate seeking of consent to share, confidentiality, sharing of information internally and with statutory bodies. The Diocese of Bristol also undertakes to retain, store and destroy records in line with current best practice.

This Policy and associated procedures and guidance will be published on the Diocese of Bristol Website <sup>21</sup> and made available to any persons on request.

Document Control Information		
Document Issued By	Adam Bond	Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser
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Changes at last review	Links to other documents updated. Update incorporates Safer recruitment guidance 2016, Promoting a safer Church Policy Statement 2017 and additional practice guidance issued by Church of England during 2017	
Next Review Due	July 2019	

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/ministering-those-may-present-risk/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/safeguarding/>