

Benefice of Ilminster & Whitelackington Safeguarding Policy including Use of Social Media & Domestic Abuse

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| Author | Church of England, Bath & Wells Diocese with additions by Jim Webb |
| Owner on behalf of the PCC | Jim Webb – Safeguarding Officer |
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| Related Policies/ Documents | Benefice of Ilminster & Whitelackington Safer Recruitment Policy Benefice of Ilminster & Whitelackington Recruitment of Ex Offenders Policy Benefice of Ilminster & Whitelackington Data Protection Policy Safer Recruitment Guidance Notes for Group Leaders |
| Notes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This document has been downloaded direct from Diocese of Bath & Wells website and is written in accordance with Church of England Safeguarding Policy 2016 The PCC are required to review this policy annually both by the diocese and insurer. |

Contacts if any queries about this document or Safeguarding:

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| Safeguarding Officer | Jim Webb | 07870 560454 | safeguarding@ilminsterpc.org.uk |
| Safeguarding Administration | Jen Webb | 01460 57811 | office@ilminsterpc.org.uk |
| Date PCC Approved (Ilminster) | | Date PCC Approved (Whitelackington) | |
| Date of Next Policy Review | September 2022 | | |

The Policy:

The Church of England, in all aspects of its life, is committed to and will promote the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It fully accepts and endorses the Children Act 1989 & 2004 & The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

Christian communities should be places where all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse. The Church is particularly called by God to support those less powerful and those without a voice in our society. Our Parish is working towards creating a safe and non-discriminatory environment by being aware of some of the particular situations that create vulnerability. Issues which need to be considered include both the physical environment and the attitudes of workers and volunteers.

A person (adult or child) who might be considered vulnerable has the right to:

- Be treated with respect and dignity.
- Have their privacy respected.
- Be able to lead as independent a life as possible.
- Be able to choose how to lead their life.
- Have the protection of the law.
- Have their rights upheld regardless of their ethnicity, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religion or cultural background.
- Be able to use their chosen language or method of communication.
- Be heard.

In any situations where there may be a difference of opinion about priorities, the welfare of any child or vulnerable adult should be the paramount concern.

This Benefice will foster and encourage best practice within its community by setting standards for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. It will work with the Diocesan Safeguarding team, statutory bodies, voluntary agencies and other faith communities to promote the safety and well-being of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

We are committed to acting promptly whenever a concern is raised about a child, young person or vulnerable adult or about the behaviour of an adult in a position of trust, and will work with the Diocesan Team, and the appropriate statutory bodies when an investigation is necessary. We are also committed to the support of those who have been abused and to listening to the voices of survivors, who can help the church learn lessons from the past.

This statement of principles applies to children, young people and adults.

We are committed to:

- The care, nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children, young people and adults.
- The safeguarding and protection of all children and adults.
- The establishment of a safe, caring community which provides an environment where there is a culture of informed vigilance regarding the dangers of abuse, and where victims of abuse can report or disclose abuse and find support.
- The promotion of best practice that contributes to the prevention of abuse.

The safeguarding and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility, not just parents or those who have formal leadership or caring responsibilities. Procedures and formal processes alone, though essential, will not protect children and adults. The community, including all its members, needs to be aware of the dangers and be prepared to report concerns and take action if necessary.

We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility for children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church in line with safer recruitment principles, including taking up references and the use of criminal records checks.

The suitability of an applicant or nominated volunteer for work with children, young people or vulnerable adults should not be solely dependent upon Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) disclosures and vetting checks. Someone whose DBS disclosure is clear may still be unsuitable. Hence the need for an interview and references to assure ourselves, as far as we can, that someone is suitable.

As part of the Volunteer Safer Recruitment process, it is the policy of this Benefice that:

- All those who regularly work with children, young people and vulnerable adults including those who work on a rota, should have enhanced DBS checks if they reach the criteria;
- Those who work only occasionally will be asked to apply for a DBS check if they reach the criteria;
- Those who manage or supervise people who work with vulnerable groups will be required to be DBS plus Barred List checked if they reach the criteria.

This Benefice accepts that, through its workers and volunteers, it is responsible for children, young people and vulnerable adults when in a church building, on church property and other premises being used by the church and during church activities. Responsibility extends to travel between places, when it is organised by the church. However, a church is not responsible for private arrangements.

The term 'complaint' can cover an allegation, disclosure or statement, something seen or something heard. The complaint need not be made in writing but once received it must be recorded and acted upon. Complaints can be taken from alleged victims and third parties.

If a child, young person or vulnerable adult comes to notice as having suffered abuse in the past, church officers will notify the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and appropriate authorities to ensure that the matter is on record. Support will be offered to adult survivors of child abuse, who will also be encouraged to make a statement to the Police if they have not done so before.

We will seek to offer informed pastoral care and support to anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry that recognises the importance of understanding the needs of those who have been abused, including their feelings of alienation and / or isolation. We recognise that anyone can be a victim of abuse in any setting, including in their own home, and in a church environment, and will work hard to make our church a safe place for people to disclose any concerns they have and receive appropriate support. We will seek to protect survivors of abuse from the possibility of further harm and abuse.

We will seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust and responsibility, where they are trusted by others.

We will seek to offer pastoral care and support, including supervision, and referral to the appropriate authorities, to any member of our Church community known to have offended against a child, young person or adult who is vulnerable. We will support them in continuing to attend church services whilst supervising their attendance to reduce the risk of further harm.

This Benefice agrees to follow the Practice Guidance from the House of Bishops on safeguarding matters, and to adopt the Diocese of Bath and Wells Safeguarding Policies.

Safeguarding Guidance for the use of Facebook and other Social Media (July 2018)

Introduction

Facebook and other social media platforms are used by young people and families as an important communication tool. However, they are also open to misuse, and Twitter tweets, Facebook posts and other public social media engagement can be subject to misunderstandings or taken out of context. This means that it is important to have guidance in place that identifies what the difficulties might be and to help church leaders make wise decisions in their Facebook and other social media use. Leaders of any church activity should be setting an example, and be a good role model which enables the young people they work with to recognise and develop their own behaviour appropriately. Youth Leaders in particular should use their own social media behaviour and engagement to help young people identify behaviour on social media which is, or is not appropriate.

Purpose

The purpose of this guidance is to:

- Protect the church from legal risks
- Ensure that the reputation of the church is protected
- Safeguard all children and young people, and those who work with them
- Ensure that any users are able clearly to distinguish where information provided via social media is legitimately representative of the church

All clergy, church officers and volunteers should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to the Data Protection Act, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the Church of England's Safeguarding Policies and Practice Guidance. Within this document there is a distinction between use of church-sanctioned social media for church purposes and personal use of social media: however, there is a likelihood that the two will overlap and it is this "grey area" that needs the most consideration.

Making "friends" on Social Media

Once you have accepted someone's friend request on most social media sites, they will have access to a wide range of information about you, such as your photographs, who your other friends are, your current location, groups you are in and events you have arranged to attend through that site. They will also have access to any comments or discussions on your timeline or personal profile.

It may not be appropriate for young people that you know in your "professional" capacity through the Church to have this much personal information about you, and whilst it is possible to restrict your profile in some instances, it is a far better idea to let young people at Church know that you will not be accepting friend requests from them, so that you can keep your personal and professional life separated. This ensures that there are no "mixed messages" about being a personal or close friend rather than being an adult who knows them in a more formal capacity. The other option is to use your social media profile purely for church activities, and refuse all requests from family and friends. Whilst some social media platforms may allow you to have two separate identities others state this is against their rules, and it is important to set a good example by adhering to the published rules of any site you are a member of.

It is also important to ensure that you have strong security on your social media profile – do not use a password that anyone could guess such as the name of your child or pet. Check your “public” profile on social media regularly to ensure that everything on it, which is available to anyone searching you on Google, is appropriate for young people, employers and family members to see.

Setting up “Groups” and “Pages” on Facebook

Facebook gives users the option to set up pages and groups. Pages are public and can be used for advertisements, announcements, and updates on activities. Groups can be public or private, and allow for people to become members, and host discussions, as well as giving space for all of the activities that also happen on a page. A church “page” could be used to advertise events for example, and also direct interested people to the private “closed” groups which will have more details and discussions about arrangements and who is attending. Discussions and posts within a closed or private group cannot be seen by people outside of the group, although a list of members can be seen.

The page or group should be set up by, and administered by more than one person, including youth leaders and other church officers. Young people can be made page or group moderators, which would allow them to remove or report inappropriate content and add relevant content, but should not have overall control of the page or group. The group administrators would need to decide who can be added to a group – just young people, or young people and parents, helpers and others interested in the activity – and also who to exclude, such as people who do not need to know about the details: e.g. young people who do not meet the age criteria, (Facebook sets a minimum age of 13 for membership) people who are not parents, helpers or church officers. Administrators would set the tone for the group by initiating discussions and setting the rules for commenting or responding to anything posted, and removing anything which breaks the rules. There is no need for the people within the group or on the page to be “Facebook friends” in order to access any of the content. Discussions can be held within a closed group between all members of the group and these reduce the need for personal private messaging. Message Chats can be set up for groups of people on messenger without them all being “friends”, and everyone in the chat can see the conversation.

Communications on Social Media

Before adding a child or young person to a group, or engaging in discussions with them on social media, it can be a good idea to ask parents or guardians to sign a consent form or send an email to say that they are in agreement with this. Again, this highlights the formal, professional relationship, and is a way of indicating to parents what contact you are likely to have with their child. That consent form could indicate restrictions that parents would like imposed, such as not adding pictures of their child to a page, not inviting their child to join certain groups or activities, or not private messaging, emailing or texting. They may specify for example communicating by email or Facebook Messenger where they can be copied in, rather than by Blab or Whatsapp (social media private messaging applications, mostly used by young people), or Twitter (where all messages are public).

Any communication with a young person initiated by a youth worker or other church officer, whether this is on a social media platform, by email or text should have someone else copied in – a parent, other youth leader, or all of the young people involved in a particular group or activity. Communications should not be sent after 10pm or before 8am unless this is unavoidable (for example a last minute change to arrangements for the following day) to discourage young people from the need to check their mobile

phones for messages during the night. Content should be limited to arrangement changes, reminders or information.

Messages should not be deleted off the system, so that there is a clear record for accountability purposes. They constitute written documents under legislation such as the Data Protection Act, and should be treated as any other written communication. Information that is serious or upsetting (such as a safeguarding concern, injury to or illness of a member of the group) should be shared face-to-face wherever possible, rather than in a social media message. Written words, which may have limited emotional context can be easily distorted, mis-interpreted and shared in ways that were not intended.

If young people contact you personally away from work/church via social networking sites, texts, emails, Skype or any other media, then it is strongly recommended that you take every reasonable step to ensure that the young person does not form an inappropriate attachment to you. Such an attachment may be misconstrued by third parties, and may give the young person false expectations and impressions. If you suspect that there is a danger of this, copy someone else into the communication (such as another youth worker), ensure that you scrutinize every word you type to check that it cannot be misconstrued, limit the contact as much as possible, and inform your member of clergy or youth work lead as soon as possible.

If you receive a significant emotionally charged personal message or one with inappropriate content from a young person via social media, inform another youth leader, or your member of clergy immediately. This is to keep communications with young people out in the open dispelling any accusation of improper relationships. Setting appropriate boundaries is a skill that some young people struggle with and it is important to set a good example. If the message suggests that the young person might harm themselves or someone else, it is important to take immediate action such as contacting parents, your safeguarding lead, or in an emergency, dialing 999.

If, when viewing an internet site, such as comments left in a group or on a Facebook profile, you become aware of a situation in which a young person is potentially in danger, then it is vital that you report it straight away. Depending on the situation, you may report it to your member of clergy, your safeguarding officer, the police, the CEOP or another relevant authority.

Photographs of young people and activities

Remember that your “private” social media posts may be visible to a range of people without you necessarily being aware. Do not post photographs of yourself or others that may be embarrassing, misinterpreted, or which would be inappropriate to share with members of the congregation in church – nothing is private once posted on social media and you cannot control where it may end up.

The Diocese has Practice Guidance about taking and using photographs of children and young people. This includes posting pictures on the internet, and parents or guardians always need to give consent to such photographs being published or shared anywhere. Please check the Practice Guidance for more details. On many social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram, it is possible to “tag” someone in a photograph. This will link it to their profile and make it available to all of their friends on that social media network, and on Google. Do not tag young people yourself, and explain to them the implications of being tagged in photographs. Discourage them from tagging others without permission. They can set their security settings to restrict who can see them and tag them in photographs.

Policy for Responding to Domestic Abuse

All forms of domestic abuse are wrong and must stop.

We are committed to promoting and supporting environments which:

- ensure that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse;
- protect those vulnerable to domestic abuse from actual or potential harm;
- recognise equality amongst people and within relationships;
- enable and encourage concerns to be raised and responded to appropriately and consistently.

We recognise that:

- all forms of domestic abuse cause damage to the survivor and express an imbalance of power in the relationship;
- all survivors (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;
- domestic abuse can occur in all communities;
- domestic abuse may be a single incident, but is usually a systematic, repeated pattern which escalates in severity and frequency;
- domestic abuse, if witnessed or overheard by a child, is a form of abuse by the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour;
- working in partnership with children, adults and other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of any child or adult suffering abuse.

We will endeavour to respond to domestic abuse by:

In all our activities –

- valuing, listening to and respecting both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

In our publicity –

- raising awareness about other agencies, support services, resources and expertise, through providing information in public and women-only areas of relevance to survivors, children and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

When concerns are raised –

- ensuring that those who have experienced abuse can find safety and informed help;
- working with the appropriate statutory bodies during an investigation into domestic abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the church community.

In our care –

- ensuring that informed and appropriate pastoral care is offered to any child, young person or adult who has suffered abuse;
- identifying and outlining the appropriate relationship of those with pastoral care responsibilities with both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

If you have any concerns or need to talk to any one please contact

Revd Jo Stobart (vicar@ilminsterpc.org.uk) or Jim Webb (safeguarding@ilminsterpc.org.uk)

There are people within the church who take responsibility for keeping our congregation safe, and their details are listed below:

Our member of clergy is:

Revd Jo Stobart – vicar@ilminsterpc.org.uk

Our Benefice Safeguarding Officer is:

Jim Webb - safeguarding@ilminsterpc.org.uk

Our Pastoral Team Coordinator is:

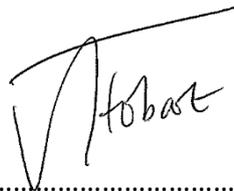
Rev Ruth Goodland – pastoralcoordinator@ilminsterpc.org.uk

Our Churchwardens are:

Ilminster – Lydia Munday and Alison Brown

Whitelackington – Steve Jackson and Dora Hallett

Signed:



Vicar – Revd Jo Stobart on behalf of the PCC's of St. Mary's
Church, Ilminster and St. Mary's Church, Whitelackington on 27th September 2021

The contact details for local and national helplines are available on the board in church.

End document