

Safeguarding Policy

St Mary's Wavertree is committed to the protection of children, young people and adults in the community of the church, creating a safe and happy environment. Every person has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of male and female in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this potential as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.

Principles

We are committed to:

- The care, nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children and adults.
- The safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable.
- The establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is a culture of 'informed vigilance' as to the dangers of abuse. We will seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of respect and responsibility, where they are trusted by others.
- 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, ensuring they are referred to appropriate authorities in a timely manner.
- Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others.

This policy will be displayed in church and a chance to talk to trained leaders (i.e. clergy, the Safeguarding Officer and Safer Recruiter) is available to all parents and volunteers.

There will be an annual safeguarding review of policies and procedures before the AGM, and a recruitment review every October/November. Any changes that need to be made, due to legal changes or information from the Diocese, will be taken on and a revised policy will be created and presented to the PCC, when required.

Abuse

We recognise that abuse can take many forms (e.g. physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, spiritual etc.). We aim as far as possible to protect our community from abuse but also recognise that abuse can occur and we need to be aware of it and how it may present. As a community, we will look for changes in physical appearance or emotional behaviour and make sure that a good network of support exists for our children, young people and adults so that every member feels able to make a disclosure.

Recruitment

We follow the Diocesan advice and procedures for Safer Recruitment. All volunteers must have been in the congregation for at least six months and are known by the staff team: the start of the recruitment process is a conversation with the staff member responsible for that ministry area.

All volunteers who work in one of our three areas of children, youth, and students undergo an application process before they start in their role. This includes: a self-declaration form, an application form, reading and signing our safeguarding policy, and completing online safeguarding training ('Foundations'). We

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also ask for and follow-up two references and those working closely with children and youth (Under 18s) undergo a DBS check. Safeguarding training and DBS checks are renewed every three years. All members of staff are rigorously recruited and undergo a DBS check.

If a DBS check comes back showing previous convictions, we will take advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor as to how to proceed. Having a criminal record does not necessarily bar anyone from working with us but we follow strict Diocesan guidelines and procedures for the recruitment of ex-offenders (found at <https://liverpoolcofe.org/diocese-safeguarding/safer-recruitment-for-parishes-and-churches/>)

Our safeguarding officer is responsible for keeping our policies and procedures up to date, with support from clergy and other members of staff.

Guidelines for working within our charity

We will ensure that there is appropriate insurance cover for all activities involving children and adults undertaken in the name of the parish. We will also ensure that health and safety policy, procedures and risk assessments are in place and that these are reviewed annually. The safest way to work within our charity is to work within one of the three role descriptions which are part of the application process for a new volunteer or staff member.

When working with others, make sure that meetings with children and vulnerable adults include at least one adult with an up to date DBS check. No child should be left with an adult who has not undergone the whole recruitment process unless they have been placed in their care by their parents. Volunteers with roles within church are not 'endorsed' outside of church and no responsibility is made by adults that choose to trust other church members socially. Church members who wish to have children looked after do so on a personal basis, and the church does not suggest people as babysitters or carers.

It is advised that, as much as possible, meetings should be held either in groups and/or in public places, and if there is any conversation that is unsettling or disturbing, it is encouraged the meeting should be stopped and concerns passed on to clergy and/or the safeguarding officer (see 'Dealing with a Disclosure below'). It is suggested that meetings of 3 or more people are safer than meeting in pairs.

Children workers and church leaders will be regularly invited to talk through safeguarding procedures, with an emphasis on safe, common sense practice.

Dealing with a disclosure

If anyone has a concern about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult, they must pass that concern on immediately to the Safeguarding Officer and a member of the clergy who will give support and follow up as necessary. Any concerns are immediately recorded (in writing, as close to word-for-word as possible, and with a date and time) and are not to be passed on, discussed or repeated to others before being recorded as a concern.

There is a difference between gossiping and sharing important information – it is not gossiping to pass on an observation to the Safeguarding Officer/clergy that has left someone concerned for the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult.

Do not investigate a concern, by asking questions, leading the person or child making the disclosure into further details, or holding on to the information to collect more from others; this is the place of the police. This includes historical incidents, where adults may recall past events but have not decided if they would choose to take the matter further.

If the guidelines are not being followed, give a reminder and pass on this concern to a member of clergy and/or the safeguarding officer.

Digital pictures and use of media

At an event where photos are being taken, a 'photo call' makes it clear to all that photos are being taken. Best practise is for pictures not to show the faces of children (so photos should be of children's work, hands, backs etc.) To use children's images, parental permission must be sought in writing and will be offered to parents when they sign forms to attend any children's activities regularly. No photos of children used in promotional material or online should be accompanied by their names.

Contact through digital media carries its own concerns and risks, with a need for caution. Where possible, contact with children should only be made through parents, group contact or with open disclosure to leaders and clergy. Communication must not be seen to lead to ambiguity or be possible to be misconstrued or misunderstood. A recommended digital curfew of 10pm – 6.30am is put in place for all St Mary's contact, however the contact is made. Choosing to act outside of the job role descriptions will be seen as acting out of St Mary's guidelines on a personal or social role. St Mary takes no responsibility for people acting 'socially'.

Safeguarding Officer

All questions and issues should be referred to the Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible.

Other documents to refer to:

There are a number of other documents which give more information about our recruitment, other policies, and keeping every member of St Mary's safe. They are listed below and are available on request.

- Volunteer Recruitment process.
- Digital Media and Images policy.
- One-to-one working policy.
- Lone working policy.
- Extreme incident policy.
- Risk assessments.

We also have separate role descriptions for our volunteers with children, youth, and students.