



Safeguarding Policy for children, young people and adults

Foreword by the Bishop of Exeter and theological statement

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus tells his followers, 'You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill top cannot be hidden' (Matthew 5. 14). Christians are to be a transformative presence in society bringing light and hope to others. In particular we are called to be a beacon of good practice in the care and protection of children and vulnerable adults. As Jesus says uncompromisingly, 'If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea' (Matthew 18.6).

Today safeguarding is at the forefront of public consciousness. In recent years we have become acutely aware of the way in which historic incidents of abuse were sometimes hidden or even tolerated. There must be zero tolerance to such behaviour and the Church needs to be at the vanguard, fostering a change of culture across society. We need to embody best practice in our parishes, schools and chaplaincies. As an organisation, it is vital that we keep people safe and support survivors of abuse, apologising for the wrongs of the past.

The Church is a place where all sorts of people, including perpetrators of abuse, seek acceptance, redemption and forgiveness. Some perpetrators will be genuine in their repentance, but others may not be. This is why forgiveness and vigilance need to go hand-in-hand. Compassion and naiveté are not the same thing.

This document, drawing upon the latest professional wisdom, sets out best practice for all who are working with the young and the vulnerable in our mission communities. Drawing upon the experience of professionals, it sets out principles to prevent abuse, as well as the protocols that must be followed should a problem arise. By operating within the legislative requirements and following this guidance we can ensure that everyone is given the safety and the security which is their right. It also lists information, resources and contact details if further help is needed.

We are determined that those who work with children and adults at risk, many of whom are volunteers, receive proper training and are appropriately supported. As one of the largest providers of voluntary children's and youth work in Devon, we are committed to ensuring that, with God's help, our churches, schools and chaplaincies are safe places where everyone is valued.

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The Rt Revd Robert Atwell
Bishop of Exeter

1. Introduction

1.1 The care and protection of children, young people 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. This policy has been informed by, and is consistent with, the Church of England policy entitled 'Promoting Safer Church 2017'.

1.2 Our policy statement is therefore based on five foundations (at section 3 below) and offers the following six overarching policy commitments of:

- 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 pose a present risk to others.

1.3 This is a Diocesan policy which applies to all our Church Bodies (i.e. Parochial Church Councils and other Diocesan related legal bodies) and Church Officers (i.e. anyone appointed or elected by, or on behalf of the Church to an office, post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid). Full understanding of, and adherence to, this policy should lead to a deepening in the understanding of, and respect for, the rights of children, young people and vulnerable adults as people of faith in the life of the Church.

1.4 Under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 20165, all authorised clergy, bishops, archdeacons, licensed readers and lay workers, churchwardens and PCCs must have 'due regard' to safeguarding guidance issued by the House of Bishops (this will include both policy and practice guidance). Failure by clergy to comply with the duty imposed by the 2016 Measure may result in disciplinary action and may invalidate insurance cover in the event of a claim being made against the PCC.

1.5 This Policy Statement is supported by more detailed Practice Guidance and Reference documents which can be found at:

Church of England National policy and guidance: [Safeguarding Policy Statements & Practice Guidance](#)

Diocese of Exeter safeguarding guidance and resources: [Safeguarding and DBS - Diocese of Exeter](#)

2. Safeguarding Policy Statement of the Diocese of Exeter

2.1 The Diocese of Exeter [*i.e. the Diocesan Bishop, the Diocesan Synod and the Diocesan Board of Finance, whose clergy and lay membership is drawn from parishes and deaneries throughout Devon*] is committed to safeguarding as an integral part of the life and ministry of the Church.

2.2 Safeguarding means the action the Church takes to promote a safer culture. We will promote the welfare of children, young people and adults, work to prevent abuse from occurring, seek to protect those that are at risk of being abused and respond well to those that have been abused. We will take care to identify where a person may present a risk to others, and offer support to them whilst taking steps to mitigate such risks.

2.3 The Diocese of Exeter affirms the 'Whole Church' approach to safeguarding, which encompasses a commitment, to and support the implementation of, consistent policy and practice across all our Church bodies and Church Officers, and that everyone associated with the Church, who comes into contact with children, young people and adults, has a role to play.

2.4 The Diocese of Exeter will take appropriate steps to maintain a safer environment for all and to practice fully and positively Christ's Ministry towards children, young people and adults; to respond sensitively and compassionately to their needs in order to help keep them safe from harm.

3. Foundations

3.1 In our implementation of this Safeguarding Policy, the Diocese of Exeter, is guided by the following foundations:

I. Gospel

The Church is called to share the good news of God's salvation through Jesus Christ. The life of our communities and institutions is integral to how we address this task. The good news speaks of welcome for all, with a particular regard for those who are most vulnerable, into a community where the value and dignity of every human being is affirmed and those in positions of responsibility and authority are truly trustworthy. Being faithful to our call to share the gospel therefore compels us to take with the utmost seriousness the challenge of preventing abuse from happening and responding well where it has.

II. Human Rights and the Law

We recognise the personal dignity and rights of all children, young people and adults, as enshrined in the Human Rights Act 1998 and the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Safeguarding work is undertaken within a legislative framework supported by government guidance which sets out a range of safeguarding duties, responsibilities and best practice to which we will adhere.

III. Core Principles

The following key principles underpin our approach to safeguarding practice:

- The welfare of the child, young person and vulnerable adult is paramount;
- Integrity, respect and listening to all;
- Transparency and openness;
- Accountability;
- Collaboration with key statutory authorities and other partners;
- Use of professional safeguarding advice and support both inside and outside the Church;
- A commitment to the prevention of abuse;

- The active management of risk;
- Promoting a culture of informed vigilance;
- Regular evaluation to ensure best practice.

IV. Good Safeguarding Practice

We will promote and maintain a safer culture that protects and promotes the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults, and in order to do so we will ensure:

- A leadership commitment, at all levels, to the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults;
- A safeguarding policy that is available to Church Officers ;
- A clear line of accountability within the Diocese of Exeter for work on safeguarding;
- Clear reporting procedures to deal with safeguarding concerns and allegations;
- Clear roles for Church Officers;
- Practice and services informed by on- going learning, review and by the views of children, young people, families and vulnerable adults;
- Safer recruitment procedures in place;
- Clear arrangements for support and/or supervision;
- Safeguarding training is made available for all Church Officers working with or in contact with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults ;
- Effective working with statutory and voluntary sector partners;
- Publicly advertised arrangements for children, young people and vulnerable adults to be able to speak to an independent person, as required;
- Complaints and whistleblowing procedures that are well publicised;
- Effective information sharing;
- Good record keeping.

V. Learning from the past

The recent statutory reports and independent reviews into abuse that have involved the Church of England and other faith organisations highlight past errors and significant lessons to be learnt to improve safeguarding. As a Church we continue to commit to a journey of truth, healing, learning and abuse prevention. We will be open with and fully commit to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) and will promote a culture that takes every opportunity to learn from experiences, however recent, whether they directly relate to the Diocese of Exeter or not, to inform and develop improved practice and response to safeguarding in the Diocese of Exeter.

4. Policy Commitments

Based on the foundations outlined above the Diocese of Exeter commits to:

4.1 Promoting a safer environment and culture

All Church Officers will respect all children, young people and vulnerable adults and promote their well-being. We will strive to create and maintain environments that are safer for all, that promote well-being, that prevent abuse, and that create nurturing, caring conditions within our churches for children, young people and vulnerable adults. We will work to continue to strengthen and review these environments through the provision of training, support, communication, learning, governance and quality assurance processes.

We will strive to support all Church Officers to adhere to safer working good practice and to challenge the abuse of power. We will ensure that processes are in place that listen to and advocate on behalf of children, young people and vulnerable adults within the knowledge that they will be cared for.

4.2 Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children and vulnerable adults within the Church

We will select and vet all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the Church, in accordance with the House of Bishops safeguarding policy and practice guidance and will train and equip Church Officers to have the confidence and skills they need to care and support children, young people and vulnerable adults and to recognise and respond to abuse. This will be done by providing and coordinating consistent and accessible safeguarding training in accordance with House of Bishops safeguarding policy and practice guidance.

4.3 Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation

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 and adult safeguarding procedures and the House of Bishops safeguarding policy and practice guidance. All safeguarding work will be recorded in line with the House of Bishops safeguarding practice guidance. All suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations, that reach the threshold for reporting to the statutory authorities, will be reported via the diocesan safeguarding adviser or designated safeguarding adviser/officer in another church body to the appropriate statutory authorities. This will be done irrespective of the status of the person. All Church Officers will cooperate with the statutory authorities in all cases. In responding to concerns or allegations of abuse relating to Church Officers, the Church will act in accordance with the requirements of criminal, civil and ecclesiastical law, and so will respect the rights and uphold the safeguards afforded in these, both to the victim/survivor and the subject of concerns or allegations.

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

We will endeavour to offer care and support to all those that have been abused, regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred.

The Church is committed to continuing to learn how to respond in a supportive and healing way to the needs of those who have suffered abuse. Those who have suffered abuse within the Church will receive a compassionate response, be listened to and be taken seriously. The Church will respond to any disclosure of abuse in accordance with House of Bishops policy and practice guidance. This will be done in collaboration with the relevant statutory agencies in accordance with criminal, civil and ecclesiastical law. They will be offered appropriate pastoral care, counselling and support - according to the agreed need. An appropriate pastoral response to the family, parish, congregation or order will be considered, with due regard to the right of privacy of those directly involved, and to the administration of justice.

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

The Diocese and its Church Officers, in exercising its responsibilities in respect of suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations of abuse, will endeavour to respect the rights under criminal, civil and ecclesiastical law of an accused Church Officer including the clergy. A legal presumption of innocence will be maintained during the statutory and Church inquiry processes. As the process progresses additional assessment, therapy and support services may be offered. The Diocese will take responsibility for ensuring that steps are taken to protect others when any Church Officer is considered a risk to children, young people and vulnerable adults. This will be done by working to mitigate any identified risks according to a safeguarding agreement. Church Officers who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse belong to families, congregations and church communities. We will be mindful of the need to provide support to members of families, parishes and congregations affected by the Church Officers in such situations.

4.6 Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others

Our churches, based on the message of the gospel, open its doors to all. It will therefore endeavour to offer pastoral care and support to any member of the church community whom may present a known risk. We will ensure that any risk has been assessed and is being managed in a safeguarding agreement in accordance with House of Bishops policy and practice guidance. This will be done in collaboration with the relevant statutory agencies in accordance with criminal, civil and ecclesiastical law.

5. Putting the policy into action

All parts of the Diocese, including Parochial Church Councils, are required to adopt or take account of this Policy Statement within their own safeguarding policy. The Policy Statement will actively underpin all safeguarding work within the Diocese and the drive to improve safeguarding practice. We will ensure that:

- All Church Officers have access to and understand this Policy Statement;
- The Policy Statement is promoted and publicised across the Diocese and its churches;
- The Church's safeguarding message is communicated as reflected in the policy;
- We will have a "Promoting a Safer Church" action plan in place that sets out, in line with national and local priorities, how the policy is being put into action and is reviewed regularly and will support churches and church groups across the Diocese in implementing this policy at a local level.

Practice guidance

Latest versions of the Church of England's Safeguarding documents can be found at:

[Safeguarding Policy Statements & Practice Guidance](#)

Diocese of Exeter safeguarding documents and resources can be found at:

[Safeguarding and DBS - Diocese of Exeter](#)

Version control		
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