

# Promoting a Safer Church

## St Michael's Church Safeguarding Policy for children, young people and vulnerable adults

At St Michael's we believe the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in our activities is the responsibility of our whole church. It is important therefore that **everyone** who participates in the life of our church must play their part in promoting a safer church for all.

This document sets out our safeguarding policy for children, young people and vulnerable adults. It is based on the good practice advice set out in the Church of England's own guidance and in particular the House of Bishops Policy and Practice Guidance. This and other guidance from St Albans Diocese can be found at: <https://www.stalbansdiocese.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-documents/>

The policy ensures that we meet our duties under Section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 to have 'due regard' to the safeguarding policy and practice guidance issued by the House of Bishops and of its core principles:

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 bodies 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.

By applying this policy we will seek to promote the welfare of children, young persons and adults, work to prevent abuse from occurring, protect all at risk of being abused and respond well to anyone that has 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.

In particular, we will:

- Promote a safer environment and culture.
- Safely recruit and supporting all those within the church with responsibilities towards children, young persons or vulnerable adults.
- Respond promptly to every safeguarding concern, incident or allegation.
- Care pastorally for victims of abuse and other affected persons.
- Care pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons, whilst protecting potential victims of abuse.
- Respond appropriately to those that may pose a present risk to others.

We will adopt an action plan to ensure that our safeguarding policy is put into action and reviewed regularly.

The PCC have appointed Dotun Akinde as Parish Safeguarding Officer to advise them on safeguarding issues, to act as link between the Parish and the Diocese on all safeguarding issues and to oversee the operation of the safeguarding policy and action plan. We have also appointed Michelle Durnell as Children's Advocate to assist in child and family pastoral issues and to be someone to whom children and young people can talk to about any problem should they wish to.

We believe that safeguarding our children, young people and vulnerable adults is a key part of our ministry here at St Michael's. 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 have an obligation to make every effort to ensure such a situation should never be allowed to occur again.

We are all called to share the good news of God's salvation through Jesus Christ. 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 when it has.

St Michael's Church PCC  
September 2023

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## St Michael's Church Action Plan for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults

In order to ensure that our safeguarding policy is put into action and reviewed regularly, the following steps should be taken:

All church officers should be clear about the extent of their responsibilities under the policy.

All those who work with children, young people or vulnerable adults at St Michael's should be selected carefully, with due regard to their suitability to their roles. We will ensure that:

- Clear and accurate job descriptions are used for all paid roles.
- All paid posts are advertised widely.
- The importance of safeguarding is stressed in all recruitment documents and publicly.
- All applicants complete comprehensive application forms.
- All applications will be carefully scrutinised (identifying any gaps in employment or personal history) to ensure that the person fully meets the person requirements for the post.
- Face to face interviews are undertaken with pre-planned questions (including safeguarding issues).
- Two references from identifiable sources will be required for all paid posts (and for unpaid posts where the applicant is new to the Church).
- Where an enhanced DBS clearance and/or a barring list check is required, this will be carried out before the applicant takes up the post.
- All these new to a post (paid and unpaid) will be inducted into their new role and effective supervision and training provided.

All those engaged in 'regulated activities' (a term defined under Schedule 4 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 as amended) involving children, young people or vulnerable adults will be required to complete an enhanced DBS clearance and barring check every three years. A range of other activities will also require a DBS clearance (either enhanced or basic) in accordance with Diocesan guidance. A self-declaration form, revealing the individual's conviction history, will also be required (see our policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders - later). Any information provided will be kept confidential.

Applicants for paid posts which involve working with children, young people or vulnerable adults will also be required to complete and sign a Church of England confidential declaration form which requires them to disclose all past convictions, cautions, investigations or allegations. However, having a criminal conviction may not necessarily preclude someone from being employed in a post. The PCC have agreed a Policy Statement on the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders <https://www.saintmichaelweb.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=299728>

This promotes equality of opportunity for all and welcomes applications from a wide range of candidates including those with criminal records. In such cases, the advice of the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser would be sought on the relevance of the applicant's record to their suitability for the role.

If any member of St Michael's becomes concerned about a child/vulnerable adult protection issue (including where it involves an allegation or incident) they should contact Dotun Akinde (Parish Safeguarding Officer) as soon as possible either by e-mail at [safeguarding@saintmichaelweb.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@saintmichaelweb.org.uk) or by phone on **07921 860862** if it is more urgent. If Dotun is unavailable, and the matter is urgent, Derwyn Williams should be contacted in the first instance by phone on 01279 899261, or one of the church wardens if Derwyn is himself unavailable. In all cases, the matter should also be confirmed by email to Dotun as soon as possible, although care should be taken to ensure that confidential information is not shared in this way. This obligation applies to all members of St Michael's whether they are Clergy, Church Officers or members of the congregation.

If one of the people listed above, or a member of their family, is involved in any way in the safeguarding matter they should not be used as a point of contact. Similarly, where an allegation is made, or an issue arises, which affects one of the persons named above, they should not be involved in the reporting process or in fact gathering before the matter is referred to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

**If anyone has any concerns that a child, young person or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger of significant or serious harm, they should call the emergency services on 999. You can also contact the Local Authority Care Services by calling 0300 123 4043 (children and young people) or 0300 123 4042 (adults)**

**Remember, the interests of the child or vulnerable adult must take precedence over all other matters.**

The relevant contact details for reporting safeguarding concerns are displayed in posters in the Church porch and in the Charnley Hall, and are included in the Church's web site.

After gathering the facts of the case, Dotun Akinde as Parish Safeguarding Officer (or in his absence one of the church officers named above) will refer the matter to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (Jez Hirst), the Deputy Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (Dave Adams) or one of the Diocesan safeguarding team who will oversee any investigation and give advice on how church officers should respond to the issues raised. **This must be done within 24 hours of the concern being identified.**

Each person having a role in the matter of concern should make a written record of the facts as soon as possible afterwards. This should include the time, date, location, persons present and details provided to them. The information should then be kept in a secure place. They should deal with any person affected by the matter in an empathetic and caring manner, reassuring them that they have done the right thing by reporting the matter. They should not attempt to carry out an investigation themselves, but can ask open questions to check their understanding of the facts. They should reassure the individual that the matter will be looked into properly, and that they will be kept informed as things progress, **but never promise to keep anything secret.** They should not discuss the matter with anyone else, except the church officers named above.

The PCC have a legal duty to report a serious safeguarding incident to the Charity Commission. In practice parishes delegate the exercise of this duty to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA). If such an event occurs, the DSA will advise the Church whether it is sufficiently serious to report to the Charity Commission, although ultimately it is for the PCC itself to decide whether to act on this advice. A small safeguarding subgroup has been set up by the PCC consisting of Derwyn Williams, Dotun Akinde (PSO), Gill Johnson (Church Warden), Claire Conquest (Church Warden) and Peter Rixson (Deputy Church Warden) to deal with this issue on its behalf. This safeguarding subgroup will report back to the PCC in general terms when such an incident is reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, but will keep the names of the individuals confidential unless there is a need to identify them.

Whilst we will ensure that any suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation of abuse will be treated seriously and appropriately, we are also mindful that a presumption of innocence should be maintained throughout the investigation process. The rights of the person against whom an allegation has been made and

their needs and the needs of their families should not be disregarded in this difficult process.

As well as responding well to any disclosure of abuse, it will be important to build trust and provide support for all those in the congregation that may have been subject to abuse - sometimes many years previously. As a congregation, we should be mindful of the needs of any person in our midst that has experienced any form of abuse, and seek for St Michael's to be a place for sharing and healing. Being able to talk to a trusted person can often be a powerful healing event, and we should all (whether we are clergy, Church Officers or members of the congregation) be always aware of the need to respond well in such a situation. In some cases, and with the person's consent, they could contact a member of the clergy or the Parish Safeguarding Officer, who will be able to put the person in touch with specialist support such as 'Safe Spaces', an independent and confidential support service provided for those who have been affected by abuse. A poster publicising Safer Spaces and giving the relevant contact numbers will be displayed in a prominent position.

A child friendly 'Staying Safe' poster will also be displayed. This will have a picture of Michelle (Children's Advocate) and encourage children to speak to her if they need a grown up to talk to.

Whilst acknowledging the right of all people to worship, we should respond appropriately to any member of the congregation that presents a potential risk to others. In particular, after consultation with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser we should consider drawing up a safeguarding agreement such as a Covenant of Care setting out the terms under which any such individual may continue to worship at our church safely. This would prevent them from working in any role which involved unsupervised contact with a child, young person or vulnerable adult, or holding any position of authority in the Church.

Suitable training in safeguarding principles and practices should be provided and required for all those working with the above groups, and all church officers having a role in safeguarding matters. This will either be at Basic, Foundation or Leadership level as appropriate. A record of safeguarding training will be kept by Dotun Akinde (Parish Safeguarding Officer).

All those working with children, young people or vulnerable adults should comply with the code of safer working practice, set out at paragraphs 11.1 to 11.4 of the Parish Safeguarding Handbook. This can be downloaded at:

<https://www.stalbansdiocese.org/safeguarding/best-practice-guidelines/>

In particular, those working with children should not be on their own with a child or young person.

Where the Church allows outside bodies to use its facilities, particularly the WCC, for events involving children, young people or vulnerable adults the hirers will be under an obligation to comply with the requirements of this safeguarding action plan. The hire agreement will include a number of specific obligations highlighting the organisations responsibilities.

The PCC will ensure that its own insurance cover, and those of any outside organisation using its premises, has the appropriate cover for activities involving children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The PCC have recently adopted a policy for responding to domestic abuse (an important safeguarding issue), which is published on the Church's web site:

<https://www.saintmichaelweb.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=299732>

The policy acknowledges that all forms of domestic abuse are wrong and emphasises how important it is that all people at St Michael's feel respected and safe from abuse. The church will endeavour to respond to cases of domestic abuse by valuing and listening to those involved, and ensuring that anyone who has experiences such abuse can find safety and informed help. If any person has any concerns or needs to talk to anyone about domestic abuse they should contact Derwyn Williams on 01279 899261 or Dotun Akinde (PSO) on 07921 860862.

The Safeguarding Coordinator should update the Parochial Church Council (PCC) on safeguarding issues and compliance with this action plan at each PCC meeting. In addition, the PCC will provide an annual safeguarding report at the APCM, and this will include a statement as to whether the PCC have complied with its duty to 'have regard' to the House of Bishop Safeguarding policy and Practice Guidance.

This action plan should be reviewed and adapted as necessary at appropriate intervals.

A copy of the latest version of the PCC Safeguarding Policy, Action Plan and associated documents will be made available on the St Michael's web site.

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