

Procedure for Responding to Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to set out how safeguarding concerns and allegations will be responded to by the parish of St Mary and St Barnabas, Thatcham.

Applicability

The policy sets out the commitment of the church to respond well to safeguarding concerns and allegations.

This procedure should be used by anyone to report safeguarding concerns relating to activities organised by or associated with St Mary or St Barnabas. It can also be used to report safeguarding concerns about a volunteer, employee, member of the clergy or anyone associated with the churches.

Safeguarding relates to protection and prevention of harm or abuse.

Nothing in this procedure is intended to prevent the reporting of concerns. The intention is to make the reporting of concerns easy. If in doubt about process, report concerns in the way which feels easiest to you.

Safeguarding concerns usually relate to children, young people or adults at risk. An adult at risk can be defined as someone who needs support with day-to-date activities because of a disability or health condition e.g. dementia, motor neurone disease, a learning disability. Adults may also be at risk because of domestic abuse. Adults at risk were previously known as a “vulnerable adults”. Any adult may be considered to be “at risk” at times, either by their own judgement, or that of others. If you are concerned about anyone, you should report concerns to ensure that the person gets the help or protection they might need.

Roles and responsibilities

The PCC – are responsible for overseeing safeguarding at St Mary and St Barnabas churches and agreeing policies and procedures, and an annual action plan.

The Rector and Clergy team – are responsible for receiving concerns and allegations and liaising with the Parish Safeguarding Officer and Diocesan Safeguarding Team to ensure concerns are responded to appropriately.

The Parish Safeguarding Officer – is responsible for receiving concerns and allegations and liaising with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and the Clergy to ensure concerns are responded to appropriately.

Staff and Volunteer Leaders of ministry groups working with children, young people and vulnerable adults – are responsible for hearing concerns raised by

individuals and team members and agreeing how these will be reported to the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

All members of the St Mary and St Barnabas Church Family – whether you volunteer in a ministry group or not, everyone has a responsibility to report concerns about children, young people or adults at risk. We should all work together to keep everyone safe.

In an emergency

If you are concerned that a child, young person or vulnerable adult is in danger, you should phone 999 and do what you can to keep that person safe, without putting yourself in danger, until the emergency services can respond.

If you need to take this action, you should then report the incident to the Parish Safeguarding Officer and the Rector, urgently (contact details below).

A safeguarding emergency is a very rare situation. Most safeguarding concerns can be reported using the procedures below.

Policy for Responding to Concerns and Allegations

As set out in the St Mary and St Barnabas Parish Safeguarding Policy, the church is committed to:

- Take steps to protect children and adults when a safeguarding concern of any kind arises, following House of Bishops guidance, including notifying the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and statutory agencies immediately.
- Offer support to victims/survivors of abuse regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred.
- Care for and monitor any member of the church community who may pose a risk to children and adults whilst maintaining appropriate confidentiality and the safety of all parties.

The Parish Safeguarding Officer and the Clergy are committed to ensuring that all concerns and allegations reported will be treated seriously. Concerns and allegations will be referred to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team, unless the Clergy and Parish Safeguarding Officer agree that it is inappropriate to do so because the concern is not sufficiently serious.

Once reported, the Parish Safeguarding Officer and the Clergy are committed to following the advice of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and any other professionals who become involved in the case, cooperating fully to ensure the appropriate response to the concern or allegation.

Reporting a Safeguarding Concern

If you are a volunteer with a particular group (either with children, young people or vulnerable adults) and you have a concern about one of the group, which is not an emergency (see above), you can discuss it with the group leader after the session and agree who will report the concern to the Parish Safeguarding Officer. You are encouraged to write down your concerns whilst they are fresh in your mind, to help you to pass on the information.

If you are concerned that the group leader is not going to report the concerns to the Parish Safeguarding Officer, you should do that yourself. There is nothing in this procedure to prevent concerns from being reported.

If you have concerns about someone working with children, young people or vulnerable adults in any capacity (voluntary or paid) at St Mary and St Barnabas Churches, you should report those concerns, either to the group leader, a member of the clergy or directly to the Parish Safeguarding Officer. This could be about their behaviour with someone, or something outside of church activities which you think may make them unsuitable to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults. You must not approach the individual directly, nor should you undertake any of your own investigation into your concerns.

If you have safeguarding concerns about a member of the clergy, you should report those directly to the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

If you are concerned that the Parish Safeguarding Officer has not taken appropriate action, you can report your concerns directly to the Safeguarding Team at the Oxford Diocese, using the contact details below.

When you report a concern, the Parish Safeguarding Officer may ask you to put these in writing and ask you to include particular information. This is so the information can be considered appropriately by others.

If you have concerns about any child, young person or vulnerable adult, do report those concerns in the way that seems right, considering this information.

What happens with your concerns?

The Parish Safeguarding Officer will report many concerns to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. These are then discussed and a plan is agreed. This might lead to contact with the local Children's or Adult's Services, and discussions with the person or the family directly. In most cases, these are led by a member of the clergy, with support from the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Where there are very serious concerns, the police may be involved.

GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) principles are considered when reporting concerns. Wherever possible, and on the advice of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team, the concerns are shared with the individual concerned in order

to be transparent. GDPR does not prevent the sharing of safeguarding concerns with any relevant teams, including the Diocesan Safeguarding Team, social services teams or the Police.

Records will be kept of the concerns, in case future concerns are raised.

As the person reporting the concerns, you are unlikely to know exactly what has happened as a result. This is because we have a duty of confidentiality to the people involved. This doesn't mean that your actions are not valued or important.

If you want to know more about Safeguarding at St Mary and St Barnabas Churches

You can find the Parish Safeguarding Policy on the websites

<http://www.stmarysthatcham.org.uk/> and <https://stbarnabasthatcham.weebly.com>

This is reviewed by the PCC annually.

The Church of England's training: *Safeguarding: Basic Awareness* gives an introduction to safeguarding. This is free and available online here:

<https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/course/view.php?id=99>

You could speak to the Parish Safeguarding Officer, contact details below.

Contact Details

Parish Safeguarding Officer:

Name: Mrs Ann Dibble

Phone: 01635 865976

Email: safeguarding.stmarysthatcham@gmail.com

Rector: Revd Mark Bennet

Phone: 01635 86742 or 07860555484

Email: markbennet@btinternet.com

Safeguarding Team, Oxford Diocese:

Phone: 01865 208295

Email: Safeguardingreferrals@oxford.anglican.org

Berkshire Women's Aid: 0118 950 4003

Berkshire NHS: If you need urgent help, but it's not an emergency, you can call our Mental Health Crisis Team on 0300 365 9999.