

Promoting a Safer Church
A Policy Statement for safeguarding children and young people
and adults working with them

This policy is written in accordance with the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance (2017) and shows how St Luke's has adopted these guidelines.

Safeguarding is part of our core faith and an integral feature of Christian life in our church.
St Luke's, therefore, is committed to:

1. Promoting a safe environment and culture.
2. Safely recruiting, training and supporting all those with any responsibility for children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church.
3. Ensuring that there is appropriate insurance cover for all activities involving children and adults undertaken in the name of the parish.
4. Having a named Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) to work with the incumbent and the PCC to implement policy and procedures.
5. Displaying in church premises and on the parish website the details of who to contact if there are safeguarding concerns or support needs.
6. Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern and allegation.
7. Listening to and taking seriously all who disclose abuse.
8. Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons.
9. Responding to and monitoring those who may pose a risk to others.
10. Caring for, whilst monitoring, those who are the subject of concerns and allegations.
11. Ensuring that health and safety policy, procedures and risk assessments are in place and are reviewed annually.
12. Reviewing the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Practices at least annually

St Luke's Parish Safeguarding Team

St Luke's Parish Safeguarding Team comprises the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO), the Families Minister, the Youth Worker, The Adults' Safeguarding Coordinator, the Pastoral Coordinator and church members nominated by the PCC. The Parish Safeguarding Officer is appointed by and reports to the PCC and is the point of contact for any allegations or concerns.

All members of the Team have undertaken Diocesan training in recognising and applying safeguarding procedures. They are responsible for ensuring that volunteers who work with children or young people complete DBS checks, provide two character references, complete a Confidential Declaration form and attend Diocesan Safeguarding training every three years. They should also ensure that all volunteers are given a copy of this Policy.

The Team is responsible for keeping secure all safeguarding information in accordance with the GDPR.

Guidelines for staff/children ratios in Groups

Group	Age range	Leader	Leaders/children ratio	
Jump	0-3	Families Minister	0-2 years	1:3
			2-3 years	1:4
Bounce	3-6	Families Minister	4-8 years	1:6
Elevate	7-11	Families Minister	9-12 years	1:8
Youth	11-14	Youth Leaders	9-12 years	1:8
			13-18 years	1:10
Youth	14-18	Youth Leaders	13-18 years	1:10

Each group should have at least two workers and if possible one male and one female.

Guidelines for Taking Photographs at church services or events

If photographs or videos of children are to be used in any way connected with the church (eg at Youth events, in Young Church, at Holiday Club etc) the following guidelines should be followed. Only Church Staff and Leaders may take photographs or videos of children or young people and only church staff work phones should be used. It should be made clear to visitors that this rule will be enforced. Parents will always be asked for their permission for their children to be photographed via an annual consent form. If there are visitors present they will be asked orally for their permission.

Guidelines for Communication

Communication between adults and young people should ideally be face-to-face. However, we recognise that electronic communication using *texts, emails, mobile phones* and *social networking* is now the norm for most children and young people. Adults within the church need to be aware of the potential pitfalls of using these methods and must learn to use them safely. Any communication between adults and young people must always be public, not private.

It is important that parents are aware of any contact between youth leaders and their children. *Phone calls* to young people, therefore, should be through parents' mobiles or landlines. Both parents and young people must give their consent to be contacted by leaders from St Luke's church. A young person's consent alone will not be acknowledged. Consent by parents will be recorded on the Young Person's Personal Information Form which is securely kept and filed in the church office. This consent will be rechecked at the beginning of each academic year. Where consent is withheld, either by parents or young people, a different form of contact will be used. If consent is withdrawn for any reason, personal contact information will be removed from the group leaders' phones. Personal contact details will only be used by the Youth Leaders. They will not be shared with anyone else.

Individual *Text Messages* or *Instant Messaging Services* from Youth Workers, Church Leaders or indeed from any adults within the church to young people should ideally not be used on the grounds that they are unsupervised communication. Any absolutely necessary message should be sent in group format and saved to ensure that an open record exists. Messages should be kept as short as possible and should avoid any abbreviations which could be misunderstood. Apps such as Snapchat should not be used and WhatsApp should not be used with under 16 year olds. If using video conferencing (eg *Zoom*), advice from the Church of England National Safeguarding Team should be followed. These guidelines are attached to this policy. If leaders have any concerns advice should be sought from a member of the staff team.

Guidelines for the safety of the children or young people in your group and for your protection as a leader

1. Treat all individuals with respect and dignity, ensuring that your own language, tone of voice and body language are respectful.
2. Sympathetic attention, humour, encouragement and appropriate physical contact are needed by children and young people but always keep everything public and avoid any physical contact that could be construed as sexual and/or abusive/offensive.
3. Never invade an individual's privacy while washing and toileting.
4. Never make sexually suggestive comments about or to an individual.
5. Never scapegoat, ridicule or reject an individual or group.
6. Learn to control and discipline without using physical punishment.
7. Always aim to work with or within sight of another adult and try to stick to the adult/child ratios in this policy.

Guidelines for dealing with disclosures

The abuse of children and young people can take many forms. The UK central government document 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' categorises and defines abuse in terms of:

1. **Physical abuse** - including hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating.
2. **Emotional abuse** - including conveying to a child that they are inadequate, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, verbal abuse, isolation, seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying).
3. **Sexual abuse** - including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. It may include involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse.
4. **Neglect** - including failure to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter, to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, to provide adequate supervision and/or access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

ONE sign is rarely a definite indication of abuse.

Remember, too, that more than one explanation is possible and do not jump to conclusions.

BUT

if there are real concerns, it is essential to act.

There are times when a child/young person may make some form of disclosure to you about abuse or neglect they have suffered. This can be verbally or indirectly through play or showing you some physical injury.

The following guidelines will help you respond appropriately.

1. React calmly, listen carefully and take what is said seriously.
2. Use open questions (who, what, when, where, how) which cannot be answered with just a 'yes' or 'no'.
3. Check, if age-appropriate, whether you may take notes.
4. Offer reassurance that disclosing is the right thing to do but do not make assumptions or offer alternative explanations.
5. Do not make promises that cannot be kept (eg that you won't share the information).
6. Check, if age-appropriate, what the person hopes to happen as a result of the disclosure.
7. Explain to the child or young person what you are going to do next and reassure him/her that you are acting in his/her best interests.

As soon as a child has confided in you about any form of abuse, write down in as much detail as possible all conversations and the circumstances in which the child spoke to you. Record the time, date, location, persons present and how the allegation was received eg by telephone, face-to-face conversation, letter etc. Give the information to Anne Swarbrick, the Parish Safeguarding Officer, who will take the next steps. If you cannot contact her and you believe that immediate action is necessary because the child may be at risk, or if you feel that proper action has not been taken, then take the next steps yourself.

1. Ring the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser on 01636 817938
2. Ask what role you will now have to play. You may have to give a written statement of evidence or attend a Child Safety Case Conference or give information to the Police.
3. Do not talk to the parents or alleged abuser.

It is important to underline the limit of your role in any of these situations. You are not a prosecutor or a judge; neither do you have the professional training to make diagnoses in given situations. You should see yourself as a trusted friend and yet be distanced enough to record and respond to the child's disclosure. Recognise that dealing with these sorts of disclosure will be upsetting and you may need personal support. Speak to the Parish Safeguarding Officer – Anne Swarbrick. Tel: 0115 914 3973 Mob: 07960 405692

Parish Safeguarding Team: Chris Gunnell (Adults' Safeguarding Coordinator)
Sarah Sharpe (Families Minister)
Tom Judge (Pastoral Coordinator)
Andy Sawford
Janet Brydon
Anne Swarbrick anne.swarbrick10@ntlworld.com