

OUR ROLES IN SAFEGUARDING ADULTS & CHILDREN

SYNOD SAFEGUARDING OFFICER

BELINDA NIELSEN

WHAT DOES SAFEGUARDING MEAN?

- Protecting one's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.
- Protecting children from abuse, maltreatment and preventing harm to a child's health or development and ensuring children and young people grow up with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Supporting people to make informed decisions and empowering them to do so.
- Achieving the best outcomes for those concerned.
- Applicable to those under 18 and adults with support and care needs.
- To provide a safe community where people can worship free from harm.
- Being appropriately and adequately trained to facilitate awareness of risks, recognise indicators of abuse and to confidently raise concerns or disclosures.

WHY IS SAFEGUARDING SO IMPORTANT?

The Church is often the first port of call for people seeking support.

The Church is seen as a refuge and safe place.

Anyone working within the church can be seen as being in a position of trust, therefore likely to receive a disclosure from someone.

We have a Duty of Care to our beneficiaries, volunteers, staff, trustees and those using the premises to keep them safe.

Prevents further harm and risk.

Supports survivors of abuse to recover

Raises awareness so that professionals, staff and communities are integrated in their role in preventing, identifying and responding to abuse and neglect.

Encouraging best practice and joint working to prevent systemic failures that could lead to serious abuse/harm or death.

Safeguarding doesn't take care of itself- requires constant and conscious effort by everyone.

Charity Commission requirement that any registered Charity has an up to date safeguarding policy in place.

Insurance liability is at stake if you do not have a policy in place and can prevent being insured again in the future

The picture and scope of abuse is ever changing with emerging issues arising constantly- we need to be tuned in to be able to recognise and respond to abuse.

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE CHURCH

- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Consider the message we are giving to our congregation/ employees etc. about how we are keeping them safe?
- To have robust, up to date Safeguarding policies in place in your church as well as designated safeguarding officers who everyone is aware of.
- To escalate any concerns immediately, irrespective of how minor it may seem.
- To have open channels of communication with the Synod Safeguarding Officer
- To have safeguarding information visibly displayed in your church.
- To support those in our churches who are under Contracts/ Agreements.

Just because you do not have children in attendance at your church now, does not mean that all the bases are covered. Be prepared for the possibility that children could access your services or premises at any stage in the future (Hall hire, toddlers group).

KEY PRINCIPLES OF SAFEGUARDING

- The person's needs must come first- Listen. What outcome do they want? What do they need to feel safe?
- The person's wellbeing and welfare is everyone's shared responsibility for achieving better outcomes, inclusive of protecting children from any activity that may place them at risk or present as a significant harm to them.
- **RECOGNISE, RESPOND, RECORD, REPORT.**
- To provide an integrated approach so that all of the assessed needs are met with relevant specialist support to achieve a personalised and holistic strategy.
- Setting a standard through leadership- Ministers having an understanding of safeguarding in order to appropriately support CYDO's and SGCo's.
- Best practice through attendance at training and regular contact with Synod Safeguarding officer and Safeguarding coordinator.
- Making sure protecting people from harm is central to your church culture
- Setting a culture that prioritises safeguarding so that it is safe for those affected to come forward and report incidents and concerns with assurance that they will be handled sensitively and properly.

SAFER RECRUITMENT

Explicit defined job descriptions

Application forms

Criminal Conviction Disclosures

Interviews

Obtaining references

DBS checking- even volunteers

Inductions- who to report safeguarding concerns to?

Supervision/ Pastoral Support available

Requirement of Charity commission to submit DBS criteria for staff

Candidates cannot undertake active duties until DBS clearance has been achieved.

Abuse doesn't just happen to children and isn't always by strangers

TRAINING

- When should I have Safeguarding training?
- Who should be trained?
- How can I find out about training?
- What are the lines of reporting in your church?
- What are the current gaps in knowledge for employees or volunteers?
- How do you record allegations, concerns and activity attendance lists?
- Creating transparency through our work- accurate recording and sharing of information.
- Developing a culture of awareness through training, support and enquiring about issues if you are unsure.
- Are the Designated Safeguarding Coordinators trained and suitable for their role?
- How do I manage an agreement with an offender?

WHAT TO DO WHEN RESPONDING TO A CONCERN

- **Listen attentively.**
- **Remain calm – be aware of your body language.**
- **Reassure – they are not to blame and have done the right thing in telling you.**
- **Do not promise confidentiality – tell them this information needs to be shared. If it is an adult, then ask for their consent to pass on what they have told you. Always seek advice if you have any concerns and don't know what to do.**
- **Ask open questions – Tell me, Explain to me, Describe for me (TED). Do not ask closed or leading questions and don't try to investigate.**
- **Avoid making comments or judgements.**
- **Don't stop an individual who is talking freely about what has happened.**
- **Seek medical attention if necessary.**
- **Explain to them what will happen next – tell them who you are going to tell and give them a timescale.**
- **Don't confront people alleged to be responsible.**
- **Keep it confidential – once you have passed the details on to the relevant person, you should not tell anyone else about the disclosure. Not even for prayer purposes or to investigate for yourself.**
- **Be quick to respond to concerns and seek more information without asking leading questions.**
- **Do not ignore or downplay any disclosures.**
- **Report it to your Church Safeguarding Coordinator or Synod Safeguarding Officer within 48 hours.**
- **In an emergency, contact the statutory services directly, and then inform your Church Safeguarding Coordinator or Synod Safeguarding Officer without delay.**

GDPR- doesn't mean to not share

Don't be afraid to share!

It is important to remember that in most serious case reviews, lack of information sharing can be a significant contributor when things go wrong.

Information should be shared with consent wherever possible. A person's right to confidentiality is not absolute and may be overridden where there is evidence that sharing information is necessary to support an investigation or where there is a risk to others.

Remember that the Data Protection and GDPR is not a barrier to sharing information but provides a framework to ensure that personal information about living persons is shared appropriately.

Sharing should be necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure.

If there has been a crime, risk of further harm to others- **Call Police immediately.**

Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

The Care Act 2014

Legal framework for how local authorities, statutory services and other service providers protect adults against abuse or neglect.

The Care Act sets out a duty to promote wellbeing within local communities

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

Section 2.58- ensuring that there are appropriate arrangements in place to safeguard and protect children from harm.

2.61- staff and volunteers should be aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and protecting children from harm, how they should respond to child protection concerns and how to make a referral to local authority children's social care or the police if necessary.

Good Practice 5

If in doubt, please get in touch with me:

Belinda Nielsen

Synod Safeguarding Officer

safeguarding@urcthamesnorth.org.uk