

## **Responding to Safeguarding Allegations in the Parish: St. Peter's, East Blatchington, Parish Policy and Guidance**

### **POLICY**

St. Peter's Church recognises that in all matters that involve allegations that someone has, or may have, caused harm to another person, whether child or adult, the welfare of the alleged victim is paramount and is our primary concern. No other consideration, however legitimate or important, can outweigh this primary responsibility.

St. Peter's Church recognises that all allegations that someone may have harmed a child or adult must be taken seriously. In all but the most exceptional circumstances, this will mean letting a safeguarding specialist know about the allegation.

St. Peter's Church recognises that it is not our responsibility to investigate allegations, nor would it be appropriate for us to do so. Our responsibility is to pass allegations on to the person/people who can respond appropriately. In the first instance, this will normally involve informing the incumbent (Fr Simon Earnshaw) and the Parish Safeguarding Officer (Zena Maher), unless the allegation is about them).

St. Peter's Church will inform the Diocesan Safeguarding Team upon becoming aware of any allegation that someone in our church community has harmed, or may have harmed, a child or adult (this must be done by the incumbent and/or the parish safeguarding officer within 24 hours).

St. Peter's Church recognises that any allegation that a person in a position of responsibility for children (paid or voluntary) has behaved in such a way that indicates they may present a risk to children, will be referred by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). If the alleged behaviour is of a criminal nature, the police will always be involved.

St. Peter's Church recognises that any allegation that a person in a position of responsibility for adults (paid or voluntary) has behaved in such a way that indicates they may present a risk to adults, will be referred by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team with the local Adults Services team manager. If the alleged behaviour is of a criminal nature, the police will always be involved. (The issue of consent is more complex with harm to adults: this will be discussed with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team in individual cases).

St. Peter's Church recognises that human behaviour is complex and many layered, and that any individual may have motives or intentions that are not apparent, even to those who believe they know them well. Practically speaking, this means that we will commit to ensuring that any allegation that a person has harmed, or may have harmed, a child or adult will be taken seriously as per the above points, even when that person is a highly respected individual whose integrity appears to be without question.

St. Peter's Church recognises that the best way to identify any false or malicious allegation is to treat all allegations the same. A transparent, fair and accountable process that is consistently applied is best for all involved, including those against whom allegations are made.

St. Peter's Church recognises that all involved in situations where allegations are made require pastoral support. In particular, the person making the allegation and their family, and the person against whom the allegation is made and their family, will require skilled and careful pastoral support. Providing that support may be complex, and we recognise and commit to working with the wider Diocese should this situation arise.

St. Peter's Church commits to implementing the advice received or any outcome arising from the above process.

## **WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD, YOUNG PERSON OR VULNERABLE ADULT**

**If you believe that the person you are concerned about is at risk of imminent harm, and that this is an emergency, you should contact the police on 999 without delay.**

Otherwise, share your concerns **immediately** (within 24 hours) with the Parish Safeguarding Officer (Zena Maher, [safeguardingsaintpeters@mail.com](mailto:safeguardingsaintpeters@mail.com), 07739 984449) or the Rector (Fr Simon Earnshaw, [simonjearnshaw@outlook.com](mailto:simonjearnshaw@outlook.com), 07596 485157), or the designated person for a particular event. Even if you are not entirely sure if there is an issue – share **any** concerns. The Parish Safeguarding Officer will contact the appropriate bodies, for advice if necessary.

Write down what you have seen/heard - keep it as detailed and as factual as possible, if you are adding your own opinion then make it clear that that is what you are doing. Try to make the circumstances and the scene of any conversations or actions as clear as you possibly can in your notes recording the date, time, location, and persons present. Do this as soon as possible, while the incident is still fresh. Sign and date the paper. Give this to the Parish Safeguarding Officer (within 24 hours) who will follow up with the appropriate authorities within 24 hours. There is a form to be completed for this purpose that will help you to include the necessary detail. This can be found in the safeguarding folder or be obtained from the Benefice Office.) Explain that the names of those involved will be passed to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

## **WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE DISCLOSES POTENTIAL ABUSE**

**If you believe that the person you are concerned about is at risk of imminent harm, and that this is an emergency, you should contact the police on 999 without delay.**

If someone discloses potential abuse to you, take what is said seriously and re-assure the person that reporting the incident is the right thing to do. Ask open questions (who, when, how etc) and establish only as much information as you need to report to the Parish Safeguarding Officer about what is believed to have happened, when and where. Ask if you can take notes, record the factual information and check with the person that you have understood and recorded the information correctly. Check what the person hopes will result from the disclosure.

Tell the child or adult what you are going to do next and share your concerns **immediately** (within 24 hours) with the Parish Safeguarding Officer or the Rector or the designated person for a particular event.

If someone discloses potential abuse to you, please do not make promises that cannot be kept (e.g. that you won't share the information), make assumptions or offer alternative explanations.

Please do not investigate matter yourself, including contacting the person about whom allegations have been made or by conducting a physical or medical examination.

If you need **immediate advice** about a worrying situation and you cannot contact the Parish Safeguarding Officer for Rector for any reason, contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team on 01273 421021.

## **WHAT TO DO IF A PERPETRATOR MAKES A DISCLOSURE**

A disclosure may be made by someone who is a convicted offender or from someone who is disclosing previously unreported abuse. This information is more likely to be disclosed to those providing pastoral support; for example, clergy and pastoral workers. The motive for admitting what has happened may be a desire to address the problem and obtain help.

The person who admits to a potential offence against a child or adult must be told that the information will not be kept confidential and that the information will be passed on to child/adult social care and/or the police.

Be supportive but do not seek more details than you need. Report within 24 hours what is believed to have happened to your Parish Safeguarding Officer, Rector or the designated person for a particular event.

## **CONTACTS FOR REPORTING SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS**

St. Peter's Parish Safeguarding Officer: Zena Maher  
Safeguardingsaintpeters@gmail.com  
07739 984449

Rector: Fr Simon Earnshaw  
simonjearnshaw@outlook.com  
01323 555026 / 07596 485157

Benefice Office  
officeebb.benefice@gmail.com  
01323 899054

Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor: Mr Colin Perkins  
safeguarding@chichester.anglican.org  
01273 425792/ 07500 771210

Local Authority Social Services  
03456 080191

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