

2025

Diocese of Durham

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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Safeguarding Policy Statement

The Diocese of Durham and the Durham Diocesan Board of Finance recognise and are committed to fulfilling our obligation to the protection and safeguarding of all children, young people and adults at risk of abuse.

The care and protection of children, young people and adults at risk of abuse involved in church activities is the responsibility of the whole church. Everyone who participates in the life of the church has a role to play in promoting a safer church for all.

The Diocese of Durham is committed to safeguarding as an integral part of the life and service of the Diocese.

This document sets out the Diocese of Durham's Safeguarding Policy which should be read in conjunction with the relevant Church of England safeguarding policies and practice guidance as set out in Annex I. Taken together, this policy and Church of England safeguarding policies and practice guidance help the diocese, parishes and individuals work towards a safer church for everyone.

Scope

The policy applies to all church bodies and church officers within the Diocese of Durham. This is a Diocesan Safeguarding Policy and is not applicable to the Cathedral. Those who work or volunteer in the Cathedral must adhere to Cathedral specific safeguarding policies and procedures.

For Local Ecumenical Partnerships this document should be used in conjunction with 'Safeguarding Guidance for Local Ecumenical Partnership' (2023) and a decision taken within the partnership with regard to which safeguarding policy will be followed.

The Ecclesiastical Insurance Group has made it clear that their insurance cover is only valid where national safeguarding policy and practice guidance is being followed.

In accordance with the Church of England's policy statement 'Promoting a Safer Church, 2017, the Diocese is committed to:

- Promoting a safer environment and culture
- Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, your people and vulnerable adults within the church
- Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation
- Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons
- Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons
- Responding to those that may present a risk to others

Promoting a safer environment and culture

The safeguarding and protection of children and adults at risk is the responsibility of everyone within a church community. The church community, including all its members, must be alert to risks and dangers and be prepared to report concerns and to take action as and when necessary.

- The Diocese will strive to create and maintain environments that are safer for all, that promote well-being, that prevent abuse and that create nurturing, caring conditions for children, young people and vulnerable adults. This is the responsibility of all who work and volunteer in the Diocese, and particularly those who have regular contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- In *Promoting a Safer Church* a 'vulnerable adult' is defined as 'a person aged 18 or over whose ability to protect himself or herself from violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation is significantly impaired through physical or mental disability or illness, emotional fragility or distress, or otherwise; and for that purpose, the reference to being impaired is to being temporarily or indefinitely impaired'.
- The Diocese will strive to support all those who have regular contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults to adhere to safer working good practice and to challenge the abuse of power.
- We will work to continue to strengthen and review these environments through the provision of training. Support, communication, learning, governance and quality assurance processes.

Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the Diocese

- The Diocese is committed to implementing safer recruitment practice in the recruitment of all Church officers (ministers, volunteers and employees) and accepts and follows the Church of England's Guidance on Safer Recruitment and People Management (2021). It is expected that parishes will follow the same practice guidance in their recruitment of volunteers and paid staff with responsibility for children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- The Diocese will equip and train all those who have responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults to have the confidence and skills they need to care and support children, young people and vulnerable adults and to recognise and respond to abuse. This will be done by providing and co-ordinating consistent and accessible safeguarding training in accordance with the Church of England's Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework.

Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation

- Anyone who brings any safeguarding suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation of current or non-current abuse to the notice of the Diocese will be responded to respectfully and in a timely manner, in line with statutory child and adult safeguarding procedures and the relevant policy and practice guidance from the Church of England.
- All safeguarding concerns must be reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) and will be recorded in line with the relevant safeguarding practice guidance.
- All suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations that reach the threshold for reporting to the statutory authorities will be reported via the DSA, or other designated safeguarding adviser in another church body, to the appropriate statutory authorities. This will be done irrespective of the status of the person.
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be informed, ~~in line with diocesan policy~~ when the threshold for referral is met.
- All Church Officers will co-operate with the statutory authorities in all cases.
- In responding to concerns or allegations of abuse relating to Church Officers, the Diocese will act in accordance with the requirements of criminal, civil and ecclesiastical law, and so will respect the rights and uphold the safeguards afforded in these, both to the victim/survivor and the subject of concerns or allegations.
- The Diocese is committed to continuing to learn how to respond in a supportive and ~~the~~ policy statement outlined above, anyone should feel able, if a child, young person or vulnerable adult is at immediate risk, to contact either the police or local social services. Where possible consent should be given by the child's or young person's parents or the vulnerable adult, unless it is considered that seeking consent will increase the risk of harm.
- A 'Whistleblowing and Complaints Procedure' is available for anyone who is unhappy with the way their concern has been addressed by the Diocese.

Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons

- The Diocese will offer care and support to all those in their care who have been abused, regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred. All victims or survivors and other affected persons will be offered the support of a safely recruited and trained support person.
- The Diocese is committed to continuing to learn how to respond in a supportive and healing ways to the needs of those who have experienced abuse and offers trauma informed response to disclosure training for anyone who wishes to engage with it.
- Those who have experienced abuse connected to the Diocese will receive a compassionate response, be listened to and be taken seriously. The Diocese will respond to any disclosure of abuse in accordance with the policy and the practice guidance of the Church of England. This will be done in collaboration with the relevant statutory agencies in accordance with criminal, civil and (where appropriate) ecclesiastical law. They will be offered appropriate pastoral care, counselling and support.
- An appropriate pastoral response to the family, parish, congregation or others will be considered with due regard to the right of privacy of those directly involved and to the administration of justice.

Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons

- The Diocese, in exercising its responsibilities to suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations of abuse, will respect the rights under criminal, civil and (where appropriate) ecclesiastical law of any accused. A legal presumption of innocence will be maintained during the statutory and (where appropriate) Church inquiry process. As the process progresses additional assessment, therapy and support services may be offered.
- The Diocese will take responsibility for ensuring that steps are taken to protect others when there are known persons accessing church services and activities who are considered to be a risk to children, young people and vulnerable adults. This will be done by working to mitigate any identified risks according to a safeguarding risk assessment and safety plan.
- Church Officers who are subject of concerns or allegations of abuse belong to families, congregations and church communities. The Diocese will be mindful of the need to provide support to members of families as well as the parishes and congregations affected by the concerns or allegations of abuse.

Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others

- The Diocese will ensure that any risk has been assessed and is being managed in a safety plan in accordance with the relevant policy and practice guidance. This will be done in collaboration with the relevant statutory agencies in accordance with criminal, civil and (where appropriate) ecclesiastical law.
- The Church based on the message of the Gospel, opens its doors to all. It will therefore endeavour to offer pastoral care and support to any member, or anyone who seeks to become a member of a church community whom may present a risk of harm to others due to:
 - having a conviction or caution for offences against children or vulnerable adults or
 - who has been barred or prohibited in some way from working with children or adults.
 - Or is considered to present a risk to either group but the outcome of an investigation is as yet unknown

Where an individual comes to the attention of the Diocese we will seek to implement a safety plan where it is safe to do so in line with advice from the local statutory agencies. Any agreement will contain safeguards for the individual and children and/or adults at risk and the parish.

Annex I: Church of England safeguarding policy & practice guidance

Promoting a Safer Church

National Safeguarding Standards

Parish Safeguarding Handbook (please note this is currently under review. Please refer to Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework for most up to date training requirements)

Key Roles and Responsibilities of Church Officer Holders and Bodies

Code of Safer Working Practice

Safer Environments and Activities

Safer Recruitment and People Management

Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework

Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

Responding Practice and Policy Guidance

- Responding to Safeguarding Concerns or Allegations that relate to Children, Young People or Vulnerable Adults
- Responding to, assessing and managing concerns or allegations against Church Officers
- Responding Well to Domestic Abuse
- Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse

Records Retention Schedule: Safeguarding

Safeguarding Guidance for Local Ecumenical Partnerships

Safeguarding Serious Incident Reporting to the Charity Commission

Annex II: List of useful contacts

Police : Call 101 or 999 in emergency

Local Contacts - Adult and Children's Social Care

Stockton

Adult Tel: 01642 527764 Out of Hours 01642 524 552

Children 01642 130080 Emergency Duty Team (outside of office hours) 01642 524 552

Darlington

Children Contact the Children's Access Point on 01325 406222 or Emergency Duty Team on 01642 524552.

Adult Contact the First Point of Contact Team on 01325 406111 or the Emergency Duty Team on 01642 524552.

Durham (both numbers are operated 24 hours)

Adult Social Care Direct on 03000 267 979.

Children First Contact on Tel: 03000 267 979.

Gateshead

Adult Adult Social Care Direct - 0191 433 7033

Children Gateshead Council's Children's Services (in confidence) on: 0191 433 2653 (office hours: Monday - Friday, 8.30am to 5pm) or Emergency Duty Team 0191 477 0844 (outside of office hours)

South Tyneside

Adults Let's Talk Team 0191 424 6000 (Monday-Friday 8.30 am to 5.00pm or 0191 456 2093 (outside of the above office hours)

Children 0191 424 5010 (Monday to Friday 8.30-5.00) or 0191 456 2093 (outside of the above office hours)

Hartlepool

Adult Tel: 01429 523390 or Out of Hours 01642 524 552

Children Tel: 01429 284284 or Emergency Duty Team (outside of office hours) 01642 524 552

Sunderland

Adult Tel: 0191 520 5552 or Out of Hours 0191 5205552

Children Contact Children's Safeguarding on 0191 520 5560 or Out of Hours 0191 5205552

Helplines for further support

NSPCC	For adults concerned about a child	Tel: 0808 800 5000
ChildLine	For children and young people	Tel: 0800 1111
Hourglass (was Action on Elder Abuse)		Helpline: 0808 808 8141
24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline		Helpline: 0808 2000 247
NAPAC	Offer support and advice to adult survivors of childhood abuse	0808 801 0331
Stop It Now	Preventing child sexual abuse	0808 1000 900
Cruse	Bereavement helpline	0808 808 1677
The Survivors Trust	0808 801 0818 Monday to Wednesday 10-7.30pm, Thursday 10-6pm and Friday 10-2pm.	
LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline	0800 999 5428	help@galop.org.uk
Men's Advice Line (Domestic Abuse helpline)	0808 801 0327	info@mensadvice.org.uk
Age UK Advice Line	0800 678 1602	

Websites for further information and resources

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.womensaid.org.uk

www.restoredrelationships.org

www.stopitnow.org.uk

www.scie.org.uk

www.ceop.police.uk

www.elderabuse.org.uk

www.ageuk.org.uk

www.barnardos.org.uk

www.spiritualabuse.com

www.modernslavery.co.uk
