

St Matthew's Westminster

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. Background

Every person has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of humankind in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this potential as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. This implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.

At St Matthew's Westminster we are committed to ensuring that our church is a safe place for everyone. We take the safeguarding and care of children, young people and vulnerable adults very seriously. We are committed to maintaining the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy, Promoting a safer church : safeguarding policy statement (2017), and the Church of England's Code of safer working practice 2021

2. Scope

The policy and procedures apply to everyone at St Matthew's including all clergy and paid staff including pastoral assistants, organist, choir and any volunteers engaged in church activities.

The definition of children /young people is:

anyone under the age of 18 as defined by the Children Act 1989.

The definition of an 'adult at risk' / vulnerable adult is defined by the Care Act 2014 as an adult who has needs for care and support (whether or not the Local Authority is meeting any of those needs) and: is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

3. Policy Statement

- We commit ourselves to nurture, protect and safeguard all our members, particularly children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- We recognise that safeguarding is the responsibility of the whole church community.
- We undertake to exercise proper care in the selection, appointment, training and support of those working in both paid and voluntary positions with children or vulnerable adults, including the use of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) disclosures and making appropriate referrals to the Independent Safeguarding Authority.

- We will respond without delay to concerns or allegations that a child or vulnerable adult may have been harmed, cooperating with the police and social care services in any investigation.
- We will challenge any abuse of power by anyone in a position of trust.
- We will seek to offer pastoral care and support to anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them appropriate pastoral support.
- We will seek to offer pastoral care and support, including supervision and referral to the proper authorities, to any member of our church community known to have offended against a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

The **Parish Policy Statement and Procedures on Safeguarding** are published with the diocesan policy statement on the church notice board. Copies can be obtained from the church office via office@stmw.org.

Related policies –St Matthew’s Data Protection Policy

SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES

1. Roles

1.1 Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)

- Undertakes the risk assessment for safeguarding
- Ensures DBS checks are undertaken for all relevant recruitment
- Reviews parish safeguarding policy and procedures on an annual basis in conjunction with the PCC
- Is the first point of contact regarding any safeguarding allegations
- Contacts the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, together with incumbent/churchwardens when required to report any allegations linked to safeguarding
- Presents regular updates and an annual report on safeguarding to the PCC and in the annual report /at the APCM
- Ensures that records are maintained of any relevant action taken in relation to allegations together with any other records in connection with the role
- Updates the diocesan safeguarding portal
- Ensures that all relevant training is undertaken by PCC members, church staff and volunteers

1.2 PCC members

- Undertake the relevant Church of England training courses (see below)
- Bring to the attention to the PSO any potential safeguarding issues
- Review and approve the parish safeguarding policy and procedures annually

1.3 Pastoral assistants

- Undertake the relevant Church of England training courses (see below)
- Bring to the attention to the PSO any potential safeguarding issues

2. Recruitment & vetting

The 16 steps of safer recruitment as detailed in the *Safer recruitment* course should be followed for any paid employees /pastoral assistants. Pre-employment checks should be made including references.

As soon as an appointment is made of a pastoral assistant, the PSO must be told so that an application for an enhanced disclosure check from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) can be initiated.

Any pastoral assistant who lives in the school flat must also be DBS checked; residence must not commence until a clear enhanced DBS certificate has been received. A DBS check must also be obtained for any administrative post, in particular if managing money / finance, as part of pre-employment checks (*standard or enhanced to be agreed*).

The start date and letter of appointment cannot be agreed and sent respectively until all pre-employment checks have been successfully completed. [NB – this is standard procedure in other organisations]

All clergy, churchwardens any PCC members are all subject to having enhanced DBS checks. Note that DBS checking of clergy is the responsibility of the Diocese.

DBS checks must also be initiated for the director of music, any volunteers working directly with children, and servers when children also volunteer as servers. Volunteer agreements should be in place where appropriate. The Parish Administrator will assist with the administration of DBS checks including hard copy ID records.

The PSO is required to have an enhanced DBS check.

Any school governors who represent the PCC must also be DBS checked.

3. Training

The PSO must attend the *Leadership* safeguarding training course which is organised by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team, together with undertaking the online C of E *Basic awareness* course and C of E *Foundation* course .

The PSO is also required to undertake *the Safer recruitment and people management* course and the *Domestic Abuse* course.

PCC members are required to take the C of E *Basic awareness* course and should also undertake the C of E *Foundation* course.

Pastoral assistants should also undertake the C of E *Basic awareness* course and C of E *Foundation* course and read the parish safeguarding policy and procedures as part of their induction.

Any volunteers working with children or vulnerable adults must also undertake the C of E *Basic awareness* course and should also take the C of E *Foundation* course.

4. Identifying, reporting and responding to concerns

Any safeguarding concerns or allegations must be reported to the Parish Safeguarding Officer – Jane Kennedy regardless of time (email jane@stmw.org) as soon as possible or to the church office in office hours, stating that the call is in relation to reporting a safeguarding concern, 9am – 5pm (tel: 0207 222 3704) or to the churchwardens, Alastair Callcutt and Susan Lowson.

In situations of immediate risk contact the police on 999.

The PSO has a duty to refer concerns to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser within 24 hours. In the absence of the incumbent, the churchwardens must also be informed by the PSO.

The PSO is then required to complete a 'Concern form' detailing concerns of abuse, harm, or neglect, what has happened and what action has been taken which is then sent to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

5. School / After school activities

- School services in church – any concerns must be reported to the school within 24 hours which will have its own policy
- Pastoral Assistants working at St Matthew's School must comply with the School's safeguarding policy
- Risk assessments should be undertaken for activities involving children after school
- Two church staff/clergy should be present when after school activities are held on church premises
- All pastoral assistants who live in the school flat in Old Pye Street must have an enhanced DBS prior to taking up residence in the flat.

6. Escorting children in church

- Individual adults should not be alone with children in the church; there should always be at least two adults present where there are children.
- Parents or guardians should accompany children to the toilet; otherwise two adults must do so.

7. Photography

- If photography /filming of services is to be undertaken, a notice should be on display /noted in the narthex and in the order of service stating that filming is taking place, services will be streamed and the videos stored on YouTube. (linked to the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR).
- Consent has to be obtained from parents/guardians for children on paper before children are filmed / photographed.
- Children over 16 can provide their own consent; consent has to be received from parents for any children under 16. This is relevant when children are servers and are in full view of the camera during Mass.
- Where possible, close up film of children should be avoided
- Consent forms from parents/guardians/ individual children have to be stored with any images of children
- If any images of children are taken and emailed internally at church or externally, recipients should destroy them once viewed. These images must not be stored on laptops, mobile phones or in St Matthew's WhatsApp group messages

- Individuals regardless of age who do not wish to be filmed should draw this to the attention of clergy and churchwardens

8. Online /social media safety

Extract from [Social media community guidelines | The Church of England](#)

- **Be safe.** The safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults must be maintained. If you have any concerns, ask a diocesan safeguarding adviser.
- **Be respectful.** Do not post or share content that is sexually explicit, inflammatory, hateful, abusive, threatening or otherwise disrespectful.
- **Be kind.** Treat others how you would wish to be treated and assume the best in people. If you have a criticism or critique to make, consider not just *whether* you would say it in person, but the tone you would use.
- **Be honest.** Don't mislead people about who you are.
- **Take responsibility.** You are accountable for the things you do, say and write. Text and images shared can be public and permanent, even with privacy settings in place. If you're not sure, don't post it.
- **Be a good ambassador.** Personal and professional life can easily become blurred online so think before you post.
- **Disagree well.** Some conversations can be places of robust disagreement and it's important we apply our values in the way we express them.
- **Credit others.** Acknowledge the work of others. Respect copyright and always credit where it is due. Be careful not to release sensitive or confidential information and always question the source of any content you are considering amplifying.
- **Follow the rules.** Abide by the terms and conditions of the various social media platforms themselves. If you see a comment that you believe breaks their policies, then please report it to the respective company.

9. Additional contacts and sources of information

- Outside of our office hours, advice can be sought from the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) helpline on 0845 120 4550. This is a 24-hour helpline, but please note that outside of normal business hours it is for urgent advice only.
- The Diocese of London's Safeguarding Team's number is 020 7932 1224.

- Childline is the main contact for children

www.childline.org.uk

0800 1111

- Domestic Abuse

www.womensaid.org.uk

0808 200 0247

www.mankind.org.uk

01823 334 244

- Family Lives

www.familylives.org.uk

0808 800 2222

Jane Kennedy
Parish Safeguarding Officer
February 2025

This policy and set of procedures were approved by St Matthew's PCC at its meeting on 17 February 2025 and will be reviewed on an annual basis.