

St Matthew's Westminster: Parish Safeguarding Officer

Following Maria Gayle-Rogers' resignation, I have offered to take over the role as Parish Safeguarding Officer. This is a PCC appointment so I have set out a brief account of my experience and immediate plans.

I became p/t children's work advisor in the Diocese of Rochester in 1989. In that year the Children Act, the most far-reaching legislation concerning children for over a century, was passed and we started to implement it.

In 1995 I was appointed Children's Officer to the diocese of Chelmsford. My responsibilities included working with a colleague to set up and implement a child protection programme including deanery open meetings and training for clergy and youth / children's leaders. I trained via a course with Essex County Council. As children's officer, I specialised in good practice but I worked with my colleague on aspects concerning child abuse and took on some cases in 1998. I left diocesan work in 2001.

In 2008, I became the second responsible adult to two boys aged 9 and 5 years after the Court granted residence to their father following their being found to be suffering serious neglect and emotional abuse from their mother. I was part of the initial investigation and still provide support as an honorary albeit eccentric grandmother.

Although my experience is historic, legislation has hardly altered so it is a case of being rusty and including vulnerable adults in the remit rather than having to learn new procedures. I updated my DBS disclosure and attended diocesan training on 31st May.

My initial work would include revising the Parish Procedures on Safeguarding, and publishing them on the notice board and parish website. Thanks to Toby's help there will be a dedicated email help-line and possibly a mobile number for people who are concerned about a matter to contact me. I plan to have a secure system of storing mandatory information, eg registers, and incident records.

I aim to have this completed by 1st September and plan to provide an update at every PCC meeting

Margaret Withers
5th July 2017