

# The Parish of Harden

## Safeguarding Policy

### Policy

The parish recognises the right of all people to live their lives in freedom and dignity, free from any type of abuse or coercion. The parish especially recognises the unique status of children and our responsibility to protect them at all times. The Church is required by God to foster relationships of the highest integrity, truthfulness and trustworthiness. Those in the parish who have positions of authority over children and vulnerable adults must use their power with sensitivity and integrity.

The parish affirms that all people have the right:

- to live in a safe, secure, stable and loving environment.
- to be protected from all forms of harm, including neglect, abuse and exploitation.
- to be listened to and heard.
- to have their cultural and racial background and experience valued and respected.
- to be considered as individuals with particular needs.
- to be given opportunities to reach their full potential.

The parish affirms that Clergy, staff and volunteers have the responsibility:

- to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are protected at all times.
- to provide a safe, secure and loving environment.
- to provide support, encouragement and stimulation to enable everyone to reach his or her full potential.
- to ensure that their actions do not violate the individual's human and civil rights and do not put themselves at risk of allegations of misconduct.
- to work in a way which will help to prevent abuse.

The parish affirms that it accepts the principle and intention of the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 that the welfare of the child is paramount at all times. The national policies as defined in "Protecting All God's Children (2010)" and "Promoting a Safe Church 2006" will be followed.

The parish will:

- ensure that all clergy, staff and volunteers working with children or vulnerable adults are carefully selected, are required to complete a Confidential Self Declaration form and where eligible are checked under the scheme run by Disclosure and Barring Service.
- require those working with children and vulnerable adults to adhere to safe working practices.
- give due regard to health and safety issues.
- ensure that all parish activities have appropriate insurance cover.
- report any allegations of abuse, whether or not involving clergy, staff or volunteers, immediately to the Statutory Authorities.
- provide appropriate training for the clergy, staff and volunteers.
- require organisations that use church premises to agree to these practices.

**Definition:** The statutory organisations have described a vulnerable adult as a person aged 18 or over who has a condition of the following type:

- A substantial learning or physical disability.
- A physical or mental illness or disorder including an addiction to alcohol or drugs.
- A significant reduction in physical or mental capacity resulting in the need for the involvement of a secular agency.

There is now, however, a growing recognition that in some situations there is a continuum of vulnerability and that a better understanding is based around the concept of 'safeguarding adults when they may be vulnerable' for example when they experience bereavement, news of serious illness or enforced employment change.

## Procedures

### How to respond to suspicions and allegations of child abuse.

Social Services and the Police have the powers to investigate allegations of abuse. It is part of their function to decide when to investigate. **It is not the job of the church organisation or of any individual within the church to make this decision.** Clergy and volunteers must remember this for the following reasons:

- Inappropriate amateur investigation may well have very adverse effects on any subsequent investigation by the statutory agencies.
- It may put a child's life at risk.
- Passing concerns over to the Social Services transfers responsibility and reduces one's own anxiety levels.

It is essential to remember that after a report is received the agencies will consider how to respond. There will not be any thoughtless or precipitate action.

Contacts with Social Services can remain anonymous or concerns can be discussed with them before giving any names.

### Dealing with a disclosure of abuse

Sexual abuse in particular is rarely disclosed at the time. Children only talk about the trauma of this after much thought. They also choose the person to talk to very carefully. In a group situation this will usually be a leader whom they feel they can trust. The following guidelines should be followed:

- Do not agree to keep secrets but do assure the young person that information will be shared only with the appropriate people.
- Listen without interrupting.
- Open questions such as "what happened next" can be asked but closed questions such as "was it your dad?" must **not** be asked.
- Provide appropriate reassurance and comfort.
- Immediately afterwards record the facts and sign and date. This can be on any available scrap of paper as the immediacy of putting the story down transcends finding a pristine piece of paper.
- Do not lose this document and in due course hand it to the social services or the police.

## **Things to do before making a referral**

Before making a referral make sure that you have as much information to hand as possible but do not let a lack of detailed information stop you making the referral. Social Services will want to know what your concerns are and as much information about the child as possible. They will need details such as the name of the child, age or date of birth and address. Details about siblings, if available will be helpful, and names of adults in the family home. However, do not let a lack of knowledge about some of these details inhibit your making the referral.

## **Making the referral**

Is there a suspicion or allegation of abuse by a member of the staff or clergy in the parish? If so this must be reported immediately to the vicar, if appropriate, or to the bishop's adviser on safeguarding.

Are there suspicions that a child may be being abused? This should be discussed with the vicar, parish safeguarding representative or the bishop's adviser on safeguarding. Alternatively these suspicions can be aired with Social Services, anonymously if desired.

Has an allegation/disclosure of abuse been made by a child? If so inform the Social Services or the Police. Inform the vicar, parish safeguarding representative or the bishop's adviser on safeguarding as soon as possible.

Does the child need immediate protection? If so, call the police (999) and then inform Social Services. Inform the vicar, parish safeguarding representative or the bishop's adviser on safeguarding as soon as possible.

Does the child need immediate medical attention? If so, call an ambulance (999) and then inform Social Services or the police. Inform the vicar, parish safeguarding representative or the bishop's adviser on safeguarding as soon as possible.

## **Vulnerable Adults**

The above procedures may be applied to the referral of a vulnerable adult but with some modification, particularly in the area of confidentiality.

"Law and sound morals impose a general duty not to pass on information which has been received in confidence. The duty of confidence is not absolute, however, and where a vulnerable adult is judged to be at risk of significant harm it will usually be legally possible, appropriate and highly desirable to disclose relevant information to the public authorities for the sake of protecting that vulnerable person. If such information has been received in confidence, the person giving the information should in the first instance be encouraged to disclose it to the authorities him or herself. Alternatively, the person receiving the disclosure should ask permission to pass the information on. If this request is denied it might still be possible to pass the information to a statutory body."

Promoting a Safe Church (2006)

If in doubt, seek advice.

## Useful Information

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013) published by the Department for Education

Adult Safeguarding (2013) published by the Department of Health

Protecting All God's Children (2010)

Promoting a Safe Church (2006)

Responding Well (to those who have been sexually abused) (2011)

Responding to Domestic Abuse (2006)

Keeping Your Child Safe Online NSPCC

Links to all the above documents are available on the parish website under "Policies"

## Useful Phone Numbers

Rev Bob Evans		01535 273758
Dr Haigh (Parish Safeguarding Officer)		01535 274225
Social Services	daytime	01274 757500
Social Services	evening	01274 530434
Police Domestic Violence Unit (all hours)		01274 376061

Other sources of advice:

NSPCC (National Child Protection Helpline- 24 hours) 0808 800 5000

Stop It Now Helpline (for suspicions about sexual abuse) 0808 1000 900

Childline 0800 1111

The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser is Jenny Price

Office	01924 371802
Mobile	07800 740 001