

Promoting a Safer Church

A Policy Statement for safeguarding children and young people and adults working with them

This policy is written in accordance with the House of Bishops’ Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance (2017) and shows how St Luke’s and Connect Gamston have adopted these guidelines.

*All that follows refers to both St. Luke’s Church and Connect Gamston.*

**1.Introduction:**

Safeguarding is part of our core faith and an integral feature of Christian life in our church.

The care & protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults 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. As with Health & Safety, we undertake risk assessments to identify any risks associated with the range of activities that take place so that we may seek to mitigate these.

**2.Aims**:

Our policy is to ensure that, as far as possible, measures are in place to safeguard the whole church community as well as those who may use our building & grounds. In order to do this, St Luke’s is committed to:

* Promoting a safe environment and culture.
* Safely recruiting, training and supporting all those with any responsibility for children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church.
* Ensuring that there is appropriate insurance cover for all activities involving children and adults undertaken in the name of the parish.
* Having a named Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) to work with the incumbent and the PCC to implement policy and procedures.
* Displaying in church premises and on the parish website the details of who to contact if there are safeguarding concerns or support needs.
* Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern and allegation.
* Listening to and taking seriously all who disclose abuse.
* Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons.
* Responding to and monitoring those who may pose a risk to others.
* Caring for, whilst monitoring, those who are the subject of concerns and allegations.
* Ensuring that health and safety policy, procedures and risk assessments are in place and are reviewed annually.
* Reviewing the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Practices at least annually

**3.Organisation and Responsibilities:**

Overall responsibility for safeguarding falls to the vicar, Reverend Mark Fraser who will ensure agreed measures are in place and annually reviewed, for the approval of the PCC.

St Luke’s Safeguarding Team:

St Luke’s Parish Safeguarding Team comprises the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO), the Families’ Minister, the Youth Worker (when in post), The Adults’ Safeguarding Coordinator, the Pastoral Coordinator and church members nominated by the PCC. The Parish Safeguarding Officer is appointed by and reports to the PCC and is the point of contact for any allegations or concerns.

All members of the team have undertaken Diocesan training in recognising and applying safeguarding procedures. They are responsible for ensuring that volunteers who work with children or young people complete DBS checks, provide two character references, complete a Confidential Declaration form and attend Diocesan Safeguarding training every three years. They should also ensure that all volunteers are given a copy of this Policy.

The Team is responsible for keeping secure all safeguarding information in accordance with GDPR. The PSO has responsibility for logging all information, actions & implementations to comply with requirements on the Diocesan Parish Dashboard so that our Diocese can be confident that our church is fulfilling its duties in respect of safeguarding.

All employees and voluntary workers have a responsibility to cooperate in the implementation of this policy. It is the responsibility of the PSO to inform directly or delegate to leaders the requirements for safeguarding in specific activities. It is also his / her responsibility to ensure that her contact details are posted in church and made known to activity leaders.

*All the preceding points are equally applicable to the Adults’ Safeguarding Policy too.*

**4. Guidelines for staff/children ratios in Groups:**

**Group Age range Leaders:Children Ratios**

**Bubbles** 0-2 0-2 years 1:3}

 2-3 years 1:4}

**Bounce** 3-6 2-3 years 1:4}

 4-8 years 1:6}

**Elevate** 7-11 4-8 years 1:6}

 9-12 years 1:8}

**Lyft** 11-14 9-12 years 1:8}

 13-18 years 1:10}

**Inspire** 14-18 13-18 years 1.:10

Each group should have at least two workers and if possible one male and one female. The staffing ratios are the government guidelines for anyone having care of children and when our groups do not coincide with these, it is up to us to ensure that our staffing meets the ratio prescribed for the youngest in the group.

**5.Operating Guidelines**:

a) Registers:

Leaders and helpers of all children’s and young people’s groups have a responsibility to take a register. It is important that these are stored in the church office or entered directly onto Churchsuite.

b) Risk Assessments:

All activities organised and/or run by St Luke’s Church for children or young people have to have a Risk Assessment, whether on church premises or off-site. At St Luke’s we have developed generic Risk Assessments which we can tailor to each activity. Specific RAs will be required for special events such as : sporting activities, ice skating trips, barbeques held in gardens etc.

c) Taking Photographs at church services or events

If photographs or videos of children are to be used in any way connected with the church (eg at Youth events, in Young Church, at Holiday Club etc) the following guidelines should be followed. Only Church Staff and Leaders may take photographs or videos of children or young people and only church staff work phones should be used. It should be made clear to visitors that this rule will be enforced. Parents will always be asked for their permission for their children to be photographed via an annual consent form. If there are visitors present they will be asked orally for their permission and a record kept.

d) Communication

Communication between adults and young people should ideally be face-to-face. However, we recognise that electronic communication using texts, emails, mobile phones and social networking is now the norm for most children and young people. Adults within the church need to be aware of the potential pitfalls of using these methods and must learn to use them safely. Any communication between adults and young people must always be public, not private.

It is important that parents are aware of any contact between youth leaders and their children. Phone calls to young people, therefore, should be through parents’ mobiles or landlines. Both parents and young people must give their consent to be contacted by leaders from St Luke’s church. A young person’s consent alone will not be acknowledged. Consent by parents will be recorded on the Children’s & Young Person’s Personal Information/Consent Form. This consent will be reviewed at the beginning of each academic year. Where consent is withheld, either by parents or young people, a different form of contact will be used. If consent is withdrawn for any reason, personal contact information will be removed from the group leaders’ phones. Personal contact details will only be used by the Youth Leaders. They will not be shared with anyone else.

Individual Text Messages or Instant Messaging Services from Youth Workers, Church Leaders or indeed from any adults within the church to young people should ideally not be used on the grounds that they are unsupervised communication. Any absolutely necessary message should be sent in group format and saved to ensure that an open record exists. Messages should be kept as short as possible and should avoid any abbreviations which could be misunderstood. Apps such as Snapchat should not be used and WhatsApp should not be used with under16 year olds. If using video conferencing (eg Zoom), advice from the Church of England National Safeguarding Team should be followed. If leaders have any concerns, advice should be sought from a member of the staff team.

e) Ensuring the safety of the children and young people & your protection as a leader

* Treat all individuals with respect and dignity, ensuring that your own language, tone of voice and body language are respectful.
* Sympathetic attention, humour, encouragement and appropriate physical contact are needed by children and young people but always keep everything public and avoid any physical contact that could be construed as sexual and/or abusive/offensive.
* Never invade an individual’s privacy while washing and toileting.
* Never make sexually suggestive comments about or to an individual.
* Never scapegoat, ridicule or reject an individual or group.
* Learn to control and discipline without using physical punishment.
* Always aim to work with or within sight of another adult and try to stick to the adult/child ratios in this policy.

6. Abuse:

The abuse of children and young people can take many forms. The UK central government document ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ categorises and defines abuse in terms of:

**a) Physical abuse -** including hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating.

**b) Emotional abuse -** including conveying to a child that they are inadequate, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, verbal abuse, isolation, seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying).

**c) Sexual** **abuse -** including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. It may include involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse.

**d) Neglect -** including failure to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter, to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, to provide adequate supervision and/or access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

**e) Domestic Abuse**: - witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse and teenagers can suffer abuse in their relationships

**f) Sexual Exploitation** – Child exploitation is a type of sexual abuse. Some may be groomed and exploited online or trafficked in the UK for the purposes of exploitation

**g) Bullying & Cyberbullying** - Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else, physically or emotionally, such as name calling, pushing, hitting, spreading rumours or threatening someone. This includes child on child abuse. Cyberbullying happens online using social networks, games or mobile phones

ONE sign is rarely a definite indication of abuse.

Remember, too, that more than one explanation is possible and do not jump to conclusions.

**BUT**

 **if there are real concerns, it is essential to act.**

**7.Responding to Disclosures:**

There are times when a child/young person may make some form of disclosure to you about abuse or neglect they have suffered. This can be verbally or indirectly through play or showing you some physical injury.

**The following guidelines will help you respond appropriately.**

* React calmly, listen carefully and take what is said seriously.
* Use open questions (who, what, when, where, how) which cannot be answered with just a ‘yes’ or ‘no’.
* Check, if age-appropriate, whether you may take notes.
* Offer reassurance that disclosing is the right thing to do but do not make assumptions or offer alternative explanations.
* Do not make promises that cannot be kept (eg that you won’t share the information).
* Check, if age-appropriate, what the person hopes to happen as a result of the disclosure.
* Explain to the child or young person what you are going to do next and reassure him/her that you are acting in his/her best interests.

As soon as a child has confided in you about any form of abuse, write down in as much detail as possible all conversations and the circumstances in which the child spoke to you. Record the time, date, location, persons present and how the allegation was received eg by telephone, face-to-face conversation, letter etc. Give the information to Sheila Street, the Parish Safeguarding Officer, who will take the next steps. If you cannot contact her and you believe that immediate action is necessary because the child may be at risk, or if you feel that proper action has not been taken, then take the next steps yourself.

1. Ring the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser on 01636 817938
2. Ask what role you will now have to play. You may have to give a written statement of evidence or attend a Child Safety Case Conference or give information to the Police.
3. Do not talk to the parents or alleged abuser.

It is important to underline the limit of your role in any of these situations. You are not a prosecutor or a judge; neither do you have the professional training to make diagnoses in given situations. You should see yourself as a trusted friend and yet be distanced enough to record and respond to the child's disclosure. Recognise that dealing with these sorts of disclosure will be upsetting and you may need personal support.

Speak to the Parish Safeguarding Officer – Sheila Street Tel: 0115 937 2295 Mob: 07800 563899

Parish Safeguarding Team:

Chris Gunnell Adults’ Safeguarding Coordinator

 Sarah Sharpe Families Minister

 Tom Judge Pastoral Coordinator

Andy Sawford

 Janet Brydon

 Claire Meese Operations Manager

 Sheila Street Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)

The PSO is assisted by:

Christine Holden with responsibility for DBS compliance

Denise Whitehead with responsibility for training

Approved by PCC on 26th September 2022

 Date for next review: September 2023