CHRIST CHURCH HIGHBURY

SAFEGUARDING: PROMOTING A SAFER CHURCH

PROCEDURE FOR RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF OR CONCERNS ABOUT THE ABUSE OF A CHILD, YOUNG PERSON OR VULNERABLE ADULT

**Introduction:**

The care and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults from abuse during their involvement in church activities is the responsibility of the whole Church. Everyone who participates in the life of Christ Church Highbury has a role to play in promoting a safer church for all.

At Christ Church Highbury, we recognise that the few who are determined to harm children or adults deliberately seek out groups or organisations where they can meet children or other vulnerable people. The Church is particularly vulnerable to these people. Creating and maintaining a safeguarding culture will discourage them from being involved for the wrong reasons and make it difficult for them to harm or abuse children or adults if they do – so it is important that a safeguarding culture is promoted and is integrated into everything that we do.

At Christ Church Highbury we are committed to providing an environment which is welcoming, respectful and enables safeguarding allegations to be raised and responded to openly, promptly and consistently. To help us to achieve this we have developed this procedure to ensure that all of those working with us, be it in an officer or a lay/voluntary capacity, is clear about the action to be taken where an allegation of the abuse of a child, young person or vulnerable adult is reported to us by the victim, if a perpetrator discloses unreported abuse or if you or someone else has involved in the church has concerns about the abuse of a child, young person or vulnerable adult involved in church activities or any part of church life.

**Remaining Alert to Possible Abuse:**

All those coming into contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults or who are working with parents or carers, must be able to appropriately respond to allegations of abuse, be alert to the potential indicators of abuse or neglect and to the risks the perpetrators of abuse pose and recognise when someone is disclosing abuse as a perpetrator. They must be willing and able to respond to signs, risks or allegations of abuse, and be prepared to record, in writing, those concerns reported to them promptly and in accordance with this procedure.

To support officers, lay persons and volunteers in their duties in this regard, Christ Church Highbury safely recruits all staff and volunteers. This means that we vet all those working or volunteering within the church in accordance with the House of Bishop’s safeguarding policy and practice guidance. This includes undertaking a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) Check for their suitability for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults, and training and equipping all church officers and volunteers with the confidence and skills to care and support children, young people and vulnerable adults through appropriate safeguarding training, as set out within the Parish Safeguarding Handbook – a link to which can be found on the Christ Church Highbury website and a hard copy of which is displayed in the fellowship room within the main church building, to recognise and respond to abuse.

**Types of Abuse:**

Abuse can take many forms – physical, emotional or sexual. It may involve psychological abuse – which can involve threats, intimidation, control, coercion or verbal abuse or withdrawal of care or support. It may involve financial abuse – including theft, fraud, exploitation or pressure or the misuse of funds. It may be discriminatory such as racist or sexist harassment or slurs or based on a person’s disability. It may take the form of domestic violence or modern slavery. All staff, clergy and volunteers or lay persons will be trained to understand and recognise the different forms of abuse as part of their safeguarding training for their role. Any questions about this training can be made to the Parish Safeguarding Officer. There are 3 levels of training – basic, foundation and leadership levels. The Parish Safeguarding Officer can advise you about the level of training required for each church role.

**Action to be taken in the event of an allegation of abuse against a child, young person or vulnerable adult:**

* Whenever a child, young person or vulnerable adult reports or indicates that they may suffer, are suffering or have suffered significant harm through abuse (physical, emotional or sexual) or neglect, or have caused harm to others, the person to whom the report is disclosed should:
	+ Listen
	+ Take what is said seriously
	+ Ask only open questions (who, what, where, when, how) and not share their own personal views or experiences
	+ Ask the person if they mind if they take notes (and record what is said as accurately as possible)
	+ Reassure them that they are doing the right thing in speaking up
	+ Do not promise confidentiality or that you will not share the information
	+ Tell them what you will be doing next
	+ As soon as possible afterwards (and within 24 hours at the very latest) record, in writing, brief notes of what was disclosed including the date and time and who was present and quotes of actual words used – being careful to record only facts, not interpretations or assumptions
	+ Report as soon as possible (and again within 24 hours depending on the urgency of the response needed). If there is immediate danger to a child, young person or vulnerable adult you should call the Police on 999 straight away. Otherwise, action should be taken without delay and within 24 hours at the latest, and should involve reporting the allegation or disclosure to the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO - Currently Rebecca Osborn) – via the safeguarding email: safeguarding@christchurchhighbury.com via the incumbent (currently Rev Andy Crich) at vicar@christchurchhighbury.com or your line manager/group activity leader – who should immediately report to the PSO.
	+ Within 24 hours of the report, the PSO, will report to the Diocese Safeguarding Adviser (Tel: 020 3837 5084 email: jo.bingham@london.anglican.org who will advise what action to take next
	+ If it is the perpetrator disclosing previously unreported abuse, for example, as part of pastoral support, the person must be told that the information will not be kept confidential and should then be passed to the Children and Social Care Team at Islington’s Social Services Department on 0207527 7400 (abuse against a child or young person) or 0207527 2299 (concern about abuse of a vulnerable adult) and the Police, and within 24 hours, to the PSO, activity leader and Diocese Safeguarding Adviser.

**Keeping of records:**

Records of all recorded concerns or allegations should be kept along with details of action taken with the PSO in a secure filing system (this will be the safeguarding inbox within the Christ church highbury server – only the PSO and a church warden have access to this email inbox and associated folders) and not held on personal computers.

**Duty of Care:**

In responding to concerns or allegations of abuse the church will act in accordance with the requirements of criminal, civil an ecclesiastical law and respect the rights and uphold the safeguards afforded in these, both to the victim/survivor and the subject of concerns or allegations.

In this regard, the Church opens its doors to all, and will ensure that all known offenders or those who might pose a risk are managed and monitored by the clergy and the PSO in consultation with the Diocese Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) in collaboration with the statutory agencies, in accordance Christ Church Highbury’s Policy statement on the recruitment of ex-offenders.

**Activity Risk assessments:**

All church group leaders are responsible for completing, and reviewing annually, an activity risk assessment for each of the activities for which they are responsible for leading where children, young people of vulnerable adults may participate. This should consider the suitability of the space used for the activity, that only safely recruited people are leading activities, that DBS’s and training in safeguarding have been completed for all leaders, that current child/staff ratios are adhered to, for ensuring that appropriate registers are kept, that leaders have parent contact details and phone numbers, and any information on allergies or special medications, for ensuring access to a first aid kit, and accident book, for ensuring only safe transport is used and how emergency situations will be managed and for evaluating the safety of any visiting leaders. Consideration should also be given to the appropriate use of personal/work mobile phones and social media.k

**Conclusion:**

The welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults is paramount and takes precedence over other considerations. If in any doubt always report to the Incumbant (Rev Chrich) and the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO), who will consult with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer whenever a safeguarding concern of any kind arises in Christ Church Highbury.

Attached to this procedure is a quick guide to responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation as described above.

More detailed information can be found in the Parish Safeguarding Handbook which can be found on the Christ Church Highbury website or in hard copy in the fellowship room.