

Safeguarding Report for APMG October 2020

The term 'safeguarding' is relatively new although the ideas behind it are not. It has its origins in the historic dilemma of how society has coped with its weak and vulnerable members – orphaned children, the materially poor and the disabled. Its history is tied up with child protection and social reform dating right back to the Elizabethan Poor Laws of 1601 and subsequent amendments and additions to these over many years. There is an interesting and easy to understand video summarising this chain of development that you might like to watch.

<https://www.virtual-college.co.uk/safeguarding-children-timeline/index.html>

Awareness of safeguarding, its profile and its bureaucracy within the Church of England, has risen massively since 2014. There is now a National Safeguarding Team and a Bishop, accountable to the House of Bishops, overseeing safeguarding in all Anglican churches. Every diocese has had to appoint a Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO). In the Oxford Diocese, of which we are part, the team working under the DSO has grown to include not only administrative support, but during this year, personnel with background experience in social work and policing.

Safeguarding legislation now applies to churches, just as it does to schools, hospitals, care homes and all places of work. To comply with legal requirements all organisations have had to develop policies, procedures and training courses to guide and ensure that appropriate patterns of behaviour are followed. The Anglican church is among the last to put these legalities into formal practice. This is possibly because in Britain, the attitudes of justice and mercy were considered institutionalised in the Church of England and 'deserving cases' were considered the responsibility of the clergy. The message today is that safeguarding concerns everyone.

Safeguarding Training

In February 2020, All Saints' Dedworth had an inspection. Representatives from the diocese came to inspect our accounts, records of attendance and other paperwork. We got top marks and great praise because so many of our congregation had completed the basic safeguarding training courses and so many of our leaders had attended courses in safer recruitment and leadership. I would like to thank everyone who made the effort to attend the face to face sessions held at All Saints' and in Maidenhead and for completing the basic training safeguarding courses online.

The main thrust for safeguarding this year (2020-21) in the Oxford Diocese is to create awareness of Domestic Abuse. I draw your attention to the publicity about Domestic Abuse appearing around the church building and in our newsletters. I had invited a speaker from the diocesan team to a parish safeguarding event on October 27th 2020. Due to restrictions enforced by Covid, all live safeguarding training in our diocese has been cancelled. There are online multichoice courses for basic safeguarding training <https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/> and Zoom sessions for Leadership and Domestic Abuse Awareness.

<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-training/#tab-id-2>

This is offered to all who wish to follow it, but candidates must have completed Basic level training first. When I followed Domestic Abuse Awareness course, I learnt a lot and thoroughly recommend it. It is well structured, interesting and not at all onerous. I hope that many of you will follow the link above and take advantage of the training. There is a diocesan requirement for leaders working with children and/or families to complete this.

Safeguarding Policies and Procedures

The inspection team were also impressed by All Saint's Safeguarding Manual containing all our policies and procedures. There is much information and guidance about safeguarding on both the Oxford Diocese web site and the C of E website. As All Saints' first official Safeguarding Officer, I felt it was

necessary to abstract from all this information, that which applied to us as a small and relatively informal church, with no paid administrative support. I followed the guidelines to draw up the required policies and as far as possible, documented as procedures what was already happening in practice. There were some areas in which we have had to become more rigorous in our approach.

Permission and Consent

One of these areas is the requirement to obtain consent from individuals or permission from parents with respect to taking part in various activities organised by the church. This is wide ranging and includes among other things transport, attendance at Sunday School and events for our youth and photography. Permission slips are available in our safeguarding manual and on our website. The period of Covid lockdown revealed gaps in our Use of Social Media policy in terms of video conferencing meetings i.e. Zoom events. A revision of this is underway.

Risk Assessments

Another area in which we have had to become more bureaucratic is that of risk assessment. It is now a requirement that events and activities at church are risk assessed. The risks and preventative precautions need to be documented and formally accepted by the PCC, prior to an event or activity taking place. Risk assessment used to be a Health and Safety concern. It now includes safeguarding too. Andrew Giles and Mike Brooks have drawn up a comprehensive general risk assessment for the whole church. This covers many activities and can be used as guidance, but every church event, on and off the premises, needs to carry its own recorded risk assessment. Risk assessment templates are available in our safeguarding manual and on our website.

Safer Recruitment and DBS Checks

The process of 'safer recruitment' has become integral to safeguarding to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are protected from abuse by those working in proximity to them. During 1919 many of our church leaders took the opportunity of attending a course on Safer Recruitment run by the Oxford Diocese, to learn how this applied in the context of church.

Disclosure and barring checks must be made on all church workers before they are allowed to take up paid or voluntary work for the church, with children or vulnerable adults. This is achieved through the Disclosure and Barring Service.

"The Disclosure and Barring Service is a non-departmental public body of the Home Office of the United Kingdom. The DBS enables organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors to make safer recruitment decisions by identifying candidates who may be unsuitable for certain work, especially involving children or vulnerable adults, and provides wider access to criminal record information through its disclosure service for England and Wales."

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>

The Church of England requires that DBS checks be renewed every 5 years. I recently audited our DBS list and found that most of us at All Saints' who need a DBS check are up to date. There are a few people who need to apply for one and one or two whose checks will soon be due for renewal.

In terms of safeguarding then, 1919-20 was a year of documenting and fine tuning our existing policies and practices and initiating others. I thank you all for your support. I know it has been exasperating for some people, especially those with a background in education or healthcare, who have undertaken occupational safeguarding training. Unfortunately, both DBS certificates and safeguarding training are location specific. In the same way that C of E approved training and a DBS certificate associated with All Saints' Dedworth is not considered adequate for your occupational position, your occupational training for safeguarding is not considered adequate by the C of E for your role at church.

This is not a satisfactory situation and the Covid pandemic has in fact moved it in the right direction. Due to the back log of applications from volunteers willing and needed to support the community in

lockdown, the location specific requirement was temporarily dropped. It remains to be seen how long this will last. Updates can be found here. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-changes-to-dbs-id>

During the coming year, the priorities for safeguarding at All Saints' Dedworth will be:

- Ensuring DBS checks and certificates are obtained for those people needing them.
- Monitoring safeguarding training and keeping records updated.
- Raising awareness of Domestic Abuse and sources of help and advice.
- Documenting our policy and practice about Domestic Abuse.
- Raising awareness of safety issues when using social media and video conferencing i.e. using Zoom and WhatsApp, as well as Facebook and Instagram etc.
- Updating our policy on Use of Social Media.
- Updating our policy and practice following any guidelines issued by the government and Church of England.

The role of Parish Safeguarding Officer could be a quick way to lose friends. However, you have all shown me a lot of understanding and given me a lot of support. I would particularly like to acknowledge help from Naomi Sinclair in the presentation of All Saints' Safeguarding Manual and help from Matthew Kilner in formulating the Photography and Social Media Policies. I also thank Andrew Giles for his cheerful encouragement to keep going in the face of problems and Barbara and Colin Carter who took the initiative in implementing procedures, putting policy into practice. Thank you all.

Jackie Wiggins

(Parish Safeguarding Officer)

October 5th 2020