

ST ANDREW'S UNITED REFORMED CHURCH SHEFFIELD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Policy for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

The purpose of this policy is to ensure procedures are in place and all adults working in or on behalf of St Andrew's are clear about roles and responsibilities for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. It is supported by the detailed overarching Safeguarding Policy of the Yorkshire Synod, and the national URC Safeguarding Guidelines.

Everyone working in or for our church shares an objective to help keep children, young people and vulnerable adults safe by contributing to providing a safe environment for all.

Church commitment – children and young people (under 18 years)

St Andrew's is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all of its children and young people. It is recognised that some children may be especially vulnerable to abuse. We recognise that children who are abused or neglected may find it difficult to develop a sense of self worth and to view the world in a positive way. Whilst at church based activities, their behaviour may be challenging or withdrawn. We recognise that some children who have experienced abuse may harm others. We will always take a considered and sensitive approach in order that we can support all of our children and young people

We ensure that all appropriate measures are applied in relation to everyone who is involved in working with children in church. All adults must be perceived by the children as safe and trustworthy. DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks are made for all adults working with children and young people in church, and all adults are expected to complete training within a year of taking up a paid or voluntary role.

All leaders who work with children at church-based activities have undertaken safeguarding training. The church runs only the Children's Church and crèche, led by a (retired) school teacher. Buzz playgroup have undertaken and also deliver safeguarding training. Other organizations who use the building regularly, with children and vulnerable adults also have Safeguarding training and up-to-date DBS records have been recorded for all of these and include the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of St Michael, The Jesus For All Nations (JFAN) Congolese Mission and the Latvian Pentecostal Church. Safeguarding training and DBS records are in progress for all of these.

Safe practice ensures that children and young people are safe, and that all adults:

- Are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions
- Work in an open and transparent way
- Discuss and/or take advice from the named Safeguarding Link Person (SLP) over any incident which may give rise to concern. Where the SLP is unavailable the Synod Safeguarding Adviser should be contacted

We are committed to working with parents and carers positively, openly and honestly. We ensure that all parents/carers are treated with respect, dignity and courtesy. We respect parents/carers' rights to privacy and confidentiality and will not share sensitive information unless we have permission or it is necessary to do so in order to protect a child.

Church commitment – vulnerable adults

St Andrew's recognises that all its members and congregation may be vulnerable at times in their lives and there needs to be particular care taken for those whose vulnerability is increased by certain situations, by disabilities or by reduction in capacities. It is recognised that this increased vulnerability may be temporary or permanent and may be visible or invisible.

Procedures

It is not the responsibility of the church to investigate welfare concerns or determine the truth of any disclosure or allegation. However, all adults have a duty to recognise concerns and maintain an open mind. Accordingly all concerns regarding the welfare of children will be reported and discussed with the designated person(s) responsible for child protection and the protection of vulnerable adults i.e. the Safeguarding Link Person.

The serious issue of the abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults may take the form of physical, emotional, sexual, financial, psychological, online, spiritual or institutional abuse or neglect. We acknowledge the effects these may have on people and their growth and development, including spiritual and religious development. The church accepts its responsibility for ensuring that all people are safe in its care and that their dignity and right to be heard is maintained. There is a responsibility to support, listen to and work for healing with survivors, offenders, communities and those who care about them. The church takes seriously the issues of promoting an individual's welfare so that each of us can aim to reach our full potential in God's grace.

The Safeguarding Link Person, working with the Yorkshire synod, is committed to respond without delay to any allegation or cause for concern that a child or vulnerable adult may have been harmed during any church based activity of whatever type. Our church commits itself to challenge the abuse of power of anyone in a position of trust.

Allegations regarding person(s) working in or on behalf of church

Where an allegation is made against any person working in or on behalf of the church that he or she has:

- a. Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child or vulnerable adult
- b. Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or vulnerable adult
- c. Has behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children
- d. Has behaved in an unsuitable manner towards a vulnerable adult the allegation will be investigated.

Detailed records will be made to include decisions, actions taken, and reasons for these. All records will be securely retained. Whilst we acknowledge such

allegations (as all others), may be false, malicious or misplaced, we also acknowledge they may be founded. It is therefore essential that all allegations are investigated properly and in line with agreed procedures.

Initial Action

- The person who has received an allegation or witnessed an event will immediately inform the SLP and make a record. Where the SLP is unavailable the Synod Safeguarding Adviser should be contacted
- In the event that an allegation is made against the SLP, the Yorkshire Synod Safeguarding Adviser will be informed
- The SLP may need to clarify any information regarding the allegation, however no person will be interviewed at this stage
- Consideration will be given throughout to the support children and their parents/carers and to the families of vulnerable adults
- The SLP will inform the Synod Safeguarding Adviser at the Yorkshire Synod and ask for support if necessary

The safeguarding link person for children, young people and vulnerable adults at St Andrew's is **Mrs Sheila Dunstan and her e-mail address is <sdunstan@blueyonder.co.uk>**.

The contact for the Synod Safeguarding Officer is Matt Knowles – tel. 0776 158 5592

Please also see Safeguarding details on Room Hire/Conditions of Hire at para (24).

This Policy is reviewed and approved annually.