

Diocese of Bristol
Parish of St Stephen Soundwell
Safeguarding Policy
November 2025

**Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults:
Policy and Procedure**

“Every person has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of male and female in God’s own image and likeness. Christians see this potential as fulfilled by God’s re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm” Diocese of Bristol 2014

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1 Policy Context

In developing this policy St Stephen's Church Soundwell commits to following the safeguarding policies of the Church of England, safeguarding policy and guidance as issued by the Diocese of Bristol and commits to working within legislation and statutory guidance as related to the Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Adults.

The main relevant policies and guidance documents are:

Church of England:

Safer Recruitment 2015

Promoting a Safer Church - House of Bishops Policy Statement 2017

Diocese of Bristol:

Safeguarding Policy

Allegations Management Procedure

Ministering to those who may present a risk

Statutory Guidance:

Working Together 2015

Care and Support Statutory Guidance 2014

These documents can all be found on the Diocese of Bristol website:

www.bristol.anglican.org/parish-resources/safeguarding/policies-and-procedures

And descriptions are given where these policies are referenced in this policy document.

2 Policy Statement

It is the responsibility of all members of St Stephen's Church Soundwell to give paramount importance to the nurture and care of children, young people and vulnerable adults in a safe and secure environment. It is about preventing harm to children and adults wherever possible.

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult is paramount.
- Everyone has different levels of vulnerability and each of us may be regarded as vulnerable at some time in our lives
- All children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable (regardless of age, disability, gender, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation) have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse which can occur in all families and communities.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, vulnerable adults and their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting their welfare.

We will develop a culture in our church that:

- Enables a safe and caring community to provide a loving environment where there is a culture of 'informed vigilance' as to the dangers of abuse.
- Enables and encourages concerns to be raised and responded to openly and consistently and protects children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable from actual or potential harm.
- Ensures all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse.
- Values, listens to and respects children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable, encouraging them to be active contributors to the church community.
- Encourages adults who may be vulnerable to lead as independent a life as possible.

When concerns are raised we will:

- Respond without delay to every concern raised that a child, young person or vulnerable adult may have been harmed, or may be at risk of harm, through abuse or neglect.
- Work with police, local authority and other partners in any investigation, including where allegations are made against a member of the Church community. □
Challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust.

If abuse has occurred we will ensure:

- Informed and appropriate pastoral care is offered to any child, young person or adult who has suffered abuse, including support to make a complaint if so desired.
- Supervision is provided for any member of the Church Community known to pose a risk of harm to others.
- Appropriate pastoral care is provided to any member of our church against whom an allegation is made.

In all recruitment we will:

- Carefully select those with any responsibility within the Church (including voluntary workers) in line with Safer Recruitment principles and checks (See St Stephen's Church Soundwell Safer Recruitment Guidelines) and provide ongoing supervision, support and training.

In our publicity we will:

- Share information about good safeguarding practice with children, young people and vulnerable adults, their parents, carers and all those working and worshipping with them.

3 Who is a child, young person, adult who may be vulnerable?

Children and young people: for the purposes of this policy means anyone under the age of 18 years. Children and young people may be abused by an adult or child, male or female. It is far more common for a child or young person to be abused by a person known to them than by a stranger. This could be a parent, family member, friend, teacher, minister or anyone else. Children may be abused in person or via electronic media, they may experience harm as a result of seeing or hearing the abuse of others.

Where conflicts of interest arise between the welfare of the child and that of adults, the child's wellbeing must always be of paramount importance and priority.

Adults who may be vulnerable: The Care Act 2014 defines an adult to whom statutory safeguarding duties apply as an adult who:

Has needs for care and support (whether or not the Local Authority is meeting any of these needs)

Is experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect

As a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of or the experience of abuse or neglect. (Care and Support Statutory Guidance 2014)

The definition may apply to anyone over the age of 18 who may not be able to protect themselves from abuse, harm or exploitation, which may be reason of illness, physical, sensory or learning disability or impairment, mental illness, use of drugs or alcohol. Increased vulnerability may be temporary or permanent and may be visible or invisible.

An adult may be abused or neglected by family (including spouses, parents and children), friends, carers (paid and unpaid), strangers and professionals and members of the community. Those at risk may live alone or may live with family or in a care setting e.g. residential home.

4 What is Safeguarding? Categories, Definitions and Indicators of Harm

Please see the table attached as **Appendix 1**. This outlines the forms of abuse noted in legislation related to safeguarding children, young people and adults alongside some examples and potential indicators that abuse or neglect may be occurring.

5 What to do if you are concerned that abuse or neglect may be happening

You may see or hear something of concern or someone may tell you something of concern (a disclosure). If a child, young person or adult tells you that they have experienced abuse, are experiencing abuse or are concerned that they may be at risk:

DO	DON'T
Listen. Try to move to a quiet space if possible	Tell them to speak to someone else
Let the person talk at their own pace and say what they want to say. If you need to clarify points ask open questions like: Tell me.. what happened, Explain ... about the incident Describe ...where it was , what happened	Investigate. Ask leading questions e.g. why did they do that, was it 'name', did it hurt you?
Take it seriously	Try not to react as though unbelieving or shocked
Reassure. Confirm they are doing the right thing by telling you.	Tell them not to tell stories

Tell them you need to share the concern with the right people e.g. PSO, police, social care	Promise to keep a secret or tell people who don't need to know.
Record what was said and the facts as accurately as possible as soon as possible	Try to just remember it
	Contact the person the allegation is about

Whether a child, young person or adult has shared a concern with you or you have seen or heard something of concern...

If the situation is urgent i.e. there is an imminent risk of harm: contact the police on 101 or 999 as appropriate or contact the Local Authority Children or Adults safeguarding Teams:

South Gloucestershire Council Safeguarding – adults & children

01454 866000 . Monday to Thursday 9am - 5pm

Friday 9am - 4.30pm

01454 615165 . Out of hours/Weekends

Once you have sought advice from police or the Local Authority and the situation is made safe, inform the Parish Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible of the concern and actions taken. If the concern is about the Parish Safeguarding Officer, or Assistant Parish Safeguarding Officer, contact the Incumbent or Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

If the situation is of concern but is not urgent: Contact the Parish Safeguarding Officer or Assistant Parish Safeguarding Officer to report the concern (if the concern is about the Parish Safeguarding Officer or Assistant Parish Safeguarding Officer contact the Incumbent or Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser). They will decide with you whether to discuss with the child, their parents or carers or the adult and any carers and whether a referral to the Local Authority Children or Adults Safeguarding Team is needed or any other action.

Note: Anyone can report a concern directly to police or the Local Authority at any time.

St Stephen's Church Soundwell hopes that all will follow this policy but where there is any concern that an issue has not been reported and should be or any reluctance to inform the church of an incident St Stephen's Church Soundwell wishes to make clear that the most important point is that those concerns are reported to the appropriate authority so that they can be acted upon where needed.

If there is an allegation that a person in a position of trust (minister, PCC member, staff member or volunteer) has abused or neglected a child or adult or that such a person may present a risk to a child or adult: The Diocese of Bristol 'Allegations Management Procedure' will be followed (copies of this procedure can be found on the Diocesan website and copies are held by the Parish Safeguarding Officers, Clergy and in the Parish Office). In brief this procedure requires that:

- The concern should be reported as above; report should reach police and Local Authority within 1 working day.
- The concern should not be made known to the person against whom the allegation is raised without agreement with police and or the Local Authority.

- Next steps will be decided in conjunction with police, Local Authority representatives (including Local Authority Designated Officer where there is a concern for the welfare of a child), the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and parish representatives (usually PSO, Incumbent and Churchwardens).

If a person is identified who has a caution or conviction for abuse of children and or adults who may pose a risk to others: (usually those with convictions for sexual and violent offences) the Diocese of Bristol guidance 'Ministering to those who may pose a risk' (Copies of this guidance can be found on the Diocesan website and copies are held by the Parish Safeguarding Officers, Clergy and in the Parish Office) will be followed. In brief this guidance advises that that Parish Safeguarding Officer and Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser are made aware and that the individual is informed that:

- To support their being part of the congregation as safely as possible, contact will be made with police, probation and other agencies connected with their case.
- The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and Church leaders will need to know of their circumstances.
- That a risk assessment will need to be completed
- And that a written agreement will be needed between the individual and the Church which agrees when the individual will or will not be involved in church services and activities, boundaries of behaviour and support offered.

6 Confidentiality and consent

Confidentiality: St Stephen's Church Soundwell accepts the principle that only those with a need to know should be made aware of safeguarding concerns or other confidential information. All staff, ministers and volunteers are expected to share confidential information appropriately and to ensure that written records and verbal information is shared responsibly and stored securely.

Consent: St Stephen's Church Soundwell accepts that all people have a right to make their own views and wishes known and that these wishes should be followed wherever possible.

Children: Where there is a concern that a child is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect they may ask those that know not to tell anyone. St Stephen's Church Soundwell accepts that we cannot do this; these concerns must be reported to the appropriate authorities to enable the child or young person to receive appropriate help and support. St Stephen's Church Soundwell asks all staff, ministers and volunteers to explain this to children in their care when appropriate. Where there is concern that a child is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect St Stephen's Church Soundwell expects that parents and carers will be communicated with and will have their consent sought for information to be shared with the Local Authority or other agencies. This should happen except where there is concern that to do so would place a child at increased risk or where a parent or carer may be involved in the sexual abuse of the child. In those circumstances advice of the Local Authority or police should be sought before informing the parents or carers of the concern. Where the allegation is against an individual who may have access to other children or vulnerable adults the referral should be made without seeking consent from parents or carers- how they are made aware of the concerns will be decided alongside statutory agencies.

Adults: Adults have the right to make their own decisions about their lives. Consent should be sought from an adult before information is shared about them. However, where an adult withholds consent for a safeguarding concern to be shared with statutory authorities (police and local authority), this should be accepted except where there may be others at risk (e.g. is the abuse or neglect is happening in a care home or hospital of the abuser has access to other vulnerable adults or children) or where there is reason to doubt that the individual has capacity to make that decision or where there is imminent risk of serious harm. Advice should be sought from statutory services or the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser where there is any doubt as to whether a concern should be referred.

7 Record Keeping

Records of all safeguarding concerns will be kept by the Parish Safeguarding Officers. They will keep a record of the initial concern and all actions taken. The records will be securely held in the Vestry Strong Room Safe. All those involved with any safeguarding concern must ensure that they provide to the Safeguarding Officer any records related to that case for secure storage.

Records will be retained as per Church of England guidance 'Safeguarding Records: Joint Practice Guidance for the Church of England and the Methodist Church' 2015 (Available on the Diocese of Bristol website).

St Stephen's Church Soundwell does not have access to secure email systems. Therefore great care should be taken where email is used to ensure that confidential information is not open to being accessed by unauthorised individuals. Individual's confidential information should not be communicated via email (e.g. any information should not make the individual identifiable by name, address etc.).

Records must be maintained of staff and volunteer training and DBS checks. These will be maintained by the Parish Safeguarding Officer and Assistant Parish Safeguarding Officer.

8 Safer Recruitment and ongoing support and supervision

All recruitment of staff and volunteers will be undertaken in line with Church of England policy 'Safer Recruitment' 2015. See St Stephen's Church Soundwell Safer Recruitment Guidance for further information.

Recruitment of staff and volunteers will only be undertaken by those delegated such responsibility from PCC.

Recruitment of staff and volunteers will only be undertaken according to agreed process.

All recruited staff and volunteers will be made known to PCC.

No one who has not been safely recruited will be permitted to work unsupervised with children, young people or adults who may be vulnerable.

In brief: All staff and volunteers will:

- ❖ Have all recruitment checks completed and approved prior to starting in role.

- ❖ All eligible staff and volunteers will have a repeat DBS disclosure every 3 years. Any lapsed DBS check will require the post holder to stand down until the check has been completed.
- ❖ Attend safeguarding training as required by the Church of England
- ❖ Attend any other training as decided by the PCC
- ❖ Have a named supervisor

9/ Roles and Responsibilities

NAME	RESPONSIBILITIES
Parochial Church Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Agree, implement, monitor and review annually this safeguarding policy and all associated policies ❖ Ensure all staff and volunteers are recruited safely ❖ Agree and implement supporting good practice guidance and processes ❖ Ensure adequate insurance for all activities ❖ Recruit and support adequate Parish Safeguarding Officers ❖ Ensure all staff and volunteers are adequately trained and supervised
Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) or Assistant Parish Safeguarding Officer (APSO) if delegated to do so	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Respond to all safeguarding allegations and concerns according to policy and guidance ❖ Monitor and report to PCC regarding adherence to policy and practice ❖ Arrange safeguarding training and maintain records ❖ Process DBS disclosures for the church and maintain records
Incumbent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Act as a point of contact should there be any safeguarding allegation or concern regarding a PSO
Church Wardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Take part in the allegations management procedure when required ❖ Take part in an 'agreement' as per 'ministering to those that may present a risk'
Activity Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Follow the Safeguarding policy and associated good practice guidance ❖ Ensure that activities are run according to good practice guidance ❖ Report any safeguarding concerns as per policy ❖ Ensure all volunteers are safely recruited ❖ Ensure all volunteers have in date training and DBS check as required ❖ Ensure all new volunteers receive agreed induction ❖ Supervise agreed volunteers
Staff and Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Follow the safeguarding policy and associated good practice guidance ❖ Report any safeguarding concern as per policy
Church members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Be aware of the safeguarding and associated policies ❖ Report any concerns as per policy

10 Additional Related Policies

Photographs and videos: It is the policy of St Stephen's Church Soundwell that no one should take photographs of children or young people without the consent of that child's parent or carer and the consent of that child where they are old enough to give consent.

Where photographs are to be taken consent will be gained from parents and carers in advance, using the agreed form. This will stipulate: who will take photos, for what purpose they may be used, how they will be stored and after what period they will be destroyed.

All photos and videos taken for St Stephen's Church Soundwell should be stored securely on devices belonging to PCC. No photo or video should be left stored on personal photography or videography equipment.

No photo will be taken, shared or used for any purpose which shows a child in any state of undress.

Children will not be named in publicity related to photographs or video.

Where an event may be photographed and is open to the public; signs will be displayed noting that photographs and or video may be taken and inviting anyone not wishing to be in any photos or video used to make this know to a named person. The photographer/ videographer will be named on these signs and will wear ID.

Only those delegated with that responsibility by PCC may ask for parental consent and arrange the taking of any photo or video.

Communications and Social Media: It is the policy of St Stephen's Church Soundwell that no one employed on a paid or voluntary basis, serving as a PCC member or as a licenced minister will contact children or young people directly via social media, email, phone or text without the knowledge and consent of that child or young persons parent or carer.

Where such contact needs to be made (for example a text to advise of a change of time for an activity) the child's parent or carer will be asked for consent in advance and the parent or carer will be copied into that communication.

Very rarely contact may be made with a child or young person without the knowledge of the child's parents or carers (for example where there are serious safeguarding concerns for a child and it would increase the risk to the child to contact the parent). In this case the person making contact with the child must agree in advance with the Parish Safeguarding Officer that this is appropriate and must keep a record of all communications.

Where a group wishes to have a social media account to publicise or communicate regarding their group or activity the following will apply:

- ❖ The account shall not be a personal account belonging to any group member or leader; it will be a separate group account.
- ❖ More than one adult will be administrator for the account so that all content and messages can be seen by more than one adult.
- ❖ All users will be made aware that bullying, harassment or other anti social behaviour will not be tolerated.

- ❖ Steps must be taken to prevent people outside the group having access to the names or personal details of anyone who is part of the group e.g. if a group Facebook page is used, the account settings should prevent group members being identified and any message sent to anyone other than the administrator.

11 Remote working

Where church activities take place remotely via videoconferencing or other media the general principles of this policy apply.

Specifically, there will be no recording of any activity without the express permission of the parents or guardians of any young people or those responsible for any vulnerable adults who are unable to give their own consent.

Whenever possible a member of the Ministry Team will participate in all online parish activities for purposes of oversight.

The same principles regarding DBS clearance, where applicable, will apply to those leading online events as for in-person events.

12 Hire of Church Premises

Organisations and individual users meeting at St Stephen's Church Soundwell will be expected to adhere to this safeguarding policy or where they work regularly with children, young people or adults who may be vulnerable, to have their own safeguarding policy.

St Stephen's Church Soundwell is responsible for overseeing users and ensuring that that agreed hire process and forms are in use. This will include obtaining a copy of the hirers safeguarding policy where relevant and providing a copy of this policy.

13 Policy implementation and Review

This policy is agreed by the St Stephen's Church Soundwell PCC.

All staff, volunteers and ministers are required to abide by this policy and associated good practice guidance.

This policy will be made available on the Church website, a copy will be available in each church.

This policy will be monitored via annual audit and annual report to PCC

This policy is to be reviewed annually.

**The PCC of St Stephen's Church, Soundwell
November 2025**