

The Parish of St Andrew the Apostle and St Mark the Evangelist, Surbiton

Policy Statement on Protecting our Children

(i) Introduction

This policy statement is based on the House of Bishops Recommendations, July 1995, Revised January 2004, the Children Act 1989, and the Home Office Code of Practice for voluntary organisations, 'Safe from Harm' 1993, and the Diocesan Guidelines on Child Abuse for clergy and lay people, 'Protecting our Children'.

(ii) Aims/declaration of Intent

The Parish of St Andrew and St Mark welcomes and values children and young people in the life of the Church.

We aim to give high priority to our work with children and young people and take seriously our responsibility to protect and safeguard their welfare.

As an important part of our mission, we are committed to:

- listening to children and young people and involving them in the life of the Church
- encouraging and supporting parents / carers
- pursuing high standards in all our work with children and young people
- giving good support and training to those working alongside children and young people in church.

(iii) Principles

Recognising that children and young people may be victims of neglect and abuse, we have adopted a policy based on the Diocesan document 'Protecting our Children', which sets out guidelines, which are spelt out in 'Procedures' (iv) below, for:

- the appointment of employees and volunteers
- the supervision of activities
- responding to allegations of abuse, including any that may be made against church members, in collaboration with statutory and voluntary agencies

The Parish of St Andrew and St Mark is committed to speaking for the needs and rights of children and young people. We acknowledge that it is the corporate responsibility of all church members, staff, and people in positions of trust to prevent any kind of abuse of children and young people.

(iv) Procedures

The legal responsibility for work with children and young people, undertaken in the name of the parish, rests with the Parochial Church Council (PCC). It is the responsibility of the PCC to adopt best practice, outlined in 'Protecting our Children' and attached as Appendix 1.

Employees and Volunteers

The PCC shall appoint all employees and volunteers according to the procedures laid down in the Diocesan guidelines. All employees and volunteers working with children will be screened. Individuals who have committed offences against children or young people will not be employed. Employees will be given a clear role or job description and should undertake a probationary period.

All current and future employees and volunteers will be asked to comply with the Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure procedure. They will be asked to provide evidence of identity and then to complete a CRB application form. Future workers will also have an informal interview with the relevant person and they will be asked to complete a probationary period.

All employees and volunteers will have read this policy statement. They will receive written guidelines on the procedures to be followed in the event of disclosure or suspicion of abuse, see section (vii). They will agree to follow these procedures, and where appropriate will receive additional training in this area.

The PCC will ensure that employees and volunteers have access to supervision, support and where appropriate, regular training. At least one of the children's workers will have training in issues and procedures concerning sexual abuse.

Parish Representative for Child Protection

In order to implement this policy, a Parish Representative for Child Protection will be appointed. S/he will:

- establish a system for screening and training present and future volunteers; initially this will mean involving an assistant;
- ensure that this system is administered, where necessary by those responsible for the various areas of work, with reference to outside groups regularly using the premises for children and youth groups, see section (vi).
- set up and maintain a confidential system for all forms, references and records;
- ensure that the work done and the policy itself, are reviewed regularly by the PCC;
- act as the person within the community of St Andrew and St Mark to whom anybody may go for support and advice in the event of disclosure, suspicion, or allegation of abuse.

Good Practice

A number of activities take place in our Churches. At present those which bring staff and volunteers into regular contact with children or young people are those which occur during Sunday Church service times, *Praise and Play* and the activities of both Choirs.

In planning and implementing its work with children and young people, the PCC will aim to minimise situations where abuse may occur, giving consideration to adult-child ratios, gender mix of the group, and visibility.

In accordance with good practice guidelines the following are minimum requirements:

- there will always be two adults in each room, however small the group, unless there is visibility and accessibility between rooms
- the names of adults involved will be recorded in the register
- attendance by group members will be registered each week
- leaders should only be replaced by a screened stand-in, helpers may be replaced by an unscreened volunteer, and their name recorded in the register. A person who stands in regularly should be screened
- if any group leaves church premises on any occasion, parental permission will be sought in advance
- leaders should avoid being alone with one child for any length of time, including having a child as a lone passenger in a car, except with parental permission
- when being collected by their parents or other appropriate adult, a safe and secure waiting place will be arranged.

The PCC will receive regular reports on the churches' work with children and young people.

It shall review this policy statement annually and update it as necessary.

(v) Insurance

The observance of 'reasonable care' is a standard insurance condition. Allegations of child abuse and events arising from them may or may not be a matter for insurance.

Subject to the policy terms, Public Liability Insurance will protect the interests of policy holders where they are found to be legally liable for accidental death or bodily injury or illness to a third party.

The policy terms require that all reasonable steps be taken to prevent injury, loss or damage occurring and failure to take such precautions may prejudice the insurance cover.

A duty therefore exists upon policy holders to adopt 'best practice' based upon current and ongoing guidelines.

Ecclesiastical Insurance Group is committed to working in harmony with the provisions of the House of Bishops' Policy and its implementation in all Dioceses, parishes and church organisations.

EIG therefore considers that the implementation of the policy by all church organisations is essential for the maintenance of public liability insurance in the field of child abuse.

Should an allegation of Child abuse arise, it is important to follow the Diocesan procedures, see below.

(vi) Other users of church premises

Any booking form of church premises for which the PCC is responsible - both one-off and regular bookings - shall include a clause which says words to the effect of:

‘You are required to ensure that children are protected at all times, by taking reasonable steps to prevent injury, loss, damage or abuse.’

For *one-off bookings* - the responsible person booking the premises should be given sight of the Parish's Child Protection Policy, and be asked to sign a statement which confirms that it has been seen and they agree to abide by it. If it is noticed that they have contravened this policy the booking may be cancelled and/or a future booking refused.

For *regular bookings* - there is a need to ensure that this policy is being practised, whilst obtaining declarations and keeping lists of adult helpers etc. is the responsibility of the group or individual booking the premises, reasonable steps need to be taken to ensure this is being done.

At the point of booking, a copy of this policy and procedures should be given to them and a requirement made to complete the attached agreement, Appendix 3, devised by the Diocesan registrar and which shall be incorporated into the standard booking form. This gives the right to ask for evidence of the implementation of our procedures.

Ensuring that groups are updating their information at least annually should happen when renewing lettings or invoicing for rent.

Groups who intend to care for children for two hours or more without their parents or carers present will need to register under the Children Act 1989 with the local Authority.

The responsibilities of the PCC, as landlord, mean providing and ensuring certain health and safety requirements are fulfilled. A check list is provided as Appendix 4.

(vii) Procedures for reporting child abuse

The welfare of the child is paramount. The Bishop's Advisers for Child Protection are available to advise on what action should be taken if anyone becomes aware of

possible child abuse. The Area Adviser should be contacted as soon as possible to help decide what further action should be taken. If appropriate a referral to Social Services may be made.

The person confided in, by a child or adult on the child's behalf, should make notes of the conversation immediately after the discussion, making sure that they have the child's full name, address, telephone number, date of birth and name and address of the child's parent/guardian. They should then consult with a colleague (e.g. incumbent, designated Child Protection representative) to discuss concerns. A further interview or investigation should not be carried out, or discussion take place with the child's parents at this stage. If not an emergency, but a referral is thought necessary, the Bishop's Adviser should be contacted, or if unavailable the local Duty Social Worker in order to discuss concerns.

Signed:

Priest-in-Charge

Date: