

Procedure for responding to Safeguarding Allegations/Concerns

This policy requires that certain 'relevant persons' ensure that all safeguarding allegations and concerns are recognised, responded to, reported and recorded.

A 'relevant person' includes all clergy, anyone licensed as a reader or lay worker, church wardens, members of the PCC, staff or team members, volunteers within church or associated teams.

However, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who may come into contact with children, young people, adults and their families has a role to play.

It is important therefore that all staff and volunteers are alert to the forms, signs and symptoms of abuse and undertake the required level of training in order to ensure they are aware of up-to-date guidance.

If a child or vulnerable adult makes a disclosure to you that may raise a safeguarding concern:

- DO remain calm and in control, but don't delay acting
- DON'T promise confidentiality or to 'keep it a secret'. Use the first opportunity you have to say that you will need to share the information with others. Make it clear you will only tell the people who need to know and should be able to help. If on hearing this the child chooses not to continue accept this and, if appropriate, give them the Childline number (0800 1111), or the Samaritans (116 123 free from any phone or 0330 094 5717, local call charges apply) where they can talk confidentially to someone.
- DO listen carefully to what is being said. Allow the child, young person or vulnerable adult to tell you 'at their own pace' and only ask questions for clarification.
- DO NOT ask leading questions. 'What happened?' is OK but not 'Were you hit?'
- DO reassure the child, young person, vulnerable adult that they did the right thing in telling someone
- Do tell the child, young person, vulnerable adult what you are going to do next. Reassure that they will receive continued support.
- DO record the disclosure and report the matter immediately (see Section 1).

Reporting the concern:

If the information you have suggests that a child is at immediate risk of being harmed, you should tell the police without delay. This is an emergency and it is appropriate therefore to use the police emergency number - 999 - to make this report.

A good guide to whether you are in this situation is to ask yourself this: is it safe for this child to go home? (Or to be at home right now if they are already there?) If your best answer, with the information you have available, to that is 'no', then you should phone the police.

If you are worried about a child but do not think that there is a risk of immediate harm, you should still speak to someone who can help as soon as possible. Our Parish Safeguarding officer is Kat Gardner and she can be contacted at any time (safeguarding@stmatthiasbrighton.org). The deputy safeguarding officer (with particular oversight of St Richard's church) is Jonathan Green. Jonathan can be contacted at safeguarding@strichardshollingdean.com. If these people are not available the concern can be shared with one of the clergy. Do not attempt to investigate the concerns yourself or talk to anyone else.

Note that this is not an emergency service, nor a replacement for the local statutory services supporting children and vulnerable adults in our community. You may therefore wish to contact one of our local services:

Sussex Police (<https://www.sussex.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/>)

Children's Services (<https://safeguarding.chichester.anglican.org/childprotection/>)

Adult Services (<https://safeguarding.chichester.anglican.org/adultprotection/>)

All this information is also on our website stmatthiasbrighton.org/dafeguarding

All confirmed safeguarding concerns will be reported to the diocesan safeguarding team as soon as possible, ideally within 24-48 hours of disclosure.

Where concerns have been raised about a child, we will aim to speak to the parent or carer of the child within 24 hours of this concern being discussed with the parish safeguarding officer, unless further advice is required from the Diocese Safeguarding team in which case, we will contact the parent immediately once that advice have been received. If the parent or carer is the subject of the concern, in which case we will follow the advice of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team regarding sharing this information.

Making a written record:

It is good practice to make a written record of the concern as soon as possible, whilst it is fresh in your mind. Record it as accurately as you can, including quoting exactly what was said where you can. You can use our templates (below) to record the details, but do not delay making simple notes as soon as you can.

The basic information that someone receiving an allegation should seek to record is:

- the nature of the concern, allegation or risk;

- the names of the people involved;
- contact details for the person reporting the concern or allegation; and
- information on whether there are other individuals or dependants that may be at risk, for instance children and young people.

The record should always be signed by the person receiving the allegation, timed and dated and it must include the location or the means (in person, online, phone call) through which the allegation was received.

This policy was reviewed by the PCC on 22 November, 2025 and will be reviewed again in November 2026.

The Limits of confidentiality

Whilst any safeguarding concern should be treated with sensitivity, the person receiving the concern should not make promises that cannot be kept regarding confidentiality.

Safeguarding concerns relating to children and young people must always be reported to the Safeguarding Officer, regardless of whether the child or young person disclosing has given their consent. Fears about sharing information should not be allowed to stand in the way of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. This means that the person receiving the disclosure should treat the matter with care, respecting the privacy of the person who made the disclosure – for instance, they should not openly share it with others who do not need to know.

Concerns relating to adults require more careful consideration, as adults have a general right to independence, choice and self-determination, including control over information about themselves. In most cases, it is good practice to gain the consent of an adult before sharing information with the Safeguarding Officer. However, there are a number of situations in which the consent of an adult does not need to be sought prior to information being shared, including:

- if the person disclosing and/or other people are, or may be, at risk of harm;
- if a crime has been, or may have been, committed;
- if sharing the information could prevent a crime;
- if the person lacks the mental capacity to make that decision and it is in their best interests to share that information, in order to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

As long as it does not increase the risk to the adult making the disclosure or to others, the person receiving the information should explain that they have a duty to share information with the Parish Safeguarding Officer. If there is uncertainty as to whether or not to share information with the Parish Safeguarding Officer, advice should be sought from them.