

St Joseph's Parish, Gerrards Cross Safeguarding Policy



It recognises that churches provide a wide range of services for children and also Vulnerable Adults; and that religious leaders, staff and volunteers have an important role in safeguarding and supporting children and families.

Children may be in need of protection from abuse or maltreatment in their own home or in other environments including the church itself. Wherever a child is at risk or concerns are raised about a child, all adults have a duty to act to safeguard that child and promote his or her welfare. The need to safeguard children is not confined to any particular age group or groups in the community and all concerns should be responded to equally, always bearing in mind that the welfare of the child is paramount.

Church activities may take place on church premises or in various other environments such as residential events, home visiting or trips out. When Church activities are organised well and with regard to the safety and wellbeing of all, we reduce the risk of avoidable harm to all participants and create spaces of true welcome where relationships which are respectful and enriching can develop.

Within a parish, in conjunction with the Safeguarding Commission the Parish Priest has responsibility for the pastoral care of the community with special regard for those most vulnerable. The Priest is assisted in this responsibility by nominating a Parish Safeguarding Representative or Safeguarding Team who are recruited in collaboration with the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator.

St Joseph's Parish is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all people and recognise our particular responsibility towards children, young people and vulnerable adults, which is reflected in the policy. We recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and the best interest of the individual is paramount. For the purposes of this policy a vulnerable adult is a person over the age of 18 who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of disability, age or illness; and is or may be unable to take care of or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation. This definition of an Adult covers all people over 18 years of age. This policy will be updated at least annually and/or when further advice and guidance is published by the government or advice agencies. It is published on the St Joseph's Parish website.

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1. Policy

This policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the statutory guidance **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021** and **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018**. The policy should be read in conjunction with the NCSC Children – Policy and procedure for the management of allegations and concerns and the Catholic Diocese of Northampton Safeguarding

statement. Staff and volunteers should familiarise themselves with Part One of the guidance on this link. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

St Joseph's Parish employees and volunteers who undertake activities with children and young people or vulnerable adults are to be *overseen always* by a nominated leader, volunteer or member of staff who has been DBS checked at an enhanced level, including the Barred List for Children and Adults.

2. Scope of the Policy

The Policy applies to all St Joseph's Parish employees and volunteers who work with St Joseph's Parish or in St Joseph's Parish's name. The policy also applies to all those engaged, commissioned or contracted to work with or for St Joseph's Parish in any capacity. St Joseph's Parish Employees/Volunteers/Contractors will:

- Assess the safeguarding risks for all events which St Joseph's Parish organises and plan for their mitigation;
- Act in good faith and treat other people with dignity and respect, without discrimination, harassment, abuse or neglect;
- Ensure that their personal and professional conduct is, and is seen to be, of the highest standard and does not bring St Joseph's Parish into disrepute;
- Take reasonable action to protect others from harm and to challenge infringements of the rights of others. The duty to protect others is greater in the case of children and young people or vulnerable adults;
- Ensure that all contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults (whether by phone, email or direct contact) is supervised, accompanied, or at least in sight of other adults;
- Never shame, belittle or degrade a child or vulnerable adult;
- Refrain from showing favouritism to individual children, young people or vulnerable adults to the exclusion of others, or inconsistent application of rules.
- Refrain from picking on individual children, young people or vulnerable adults;
- Always challenge bullying and child-to-child abuse in all its forms;
- Avoid touching a child, young person or vulnerable adult in a manner which is considered culturally insensitive or inappropriate.
- Refrain from engaging in any form of personal relationship with any child, young person or vulnerable adult in the course of your work with St Joseph's Parish;
- Always ask permission from before taking images (e.g. photographs, videos) of them. The decision to say no will always be respected.
- Record and report any safeguarding incident they witness or a safeguarding allegation is disclosed to them.

3. Safer recruitment

Applicants for roles working for St Joseph's Parish will:

- Provide a detailed CV which includes their employment history and any gaps in that history will be explored at interview;
- Provide two referees who are not family members or personal friends;
- Provide evidence of identity and qualifications;
- If offered employment or a volunteer role, be checked in accordance with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) regulations *as appropriate to their role*
- If offered employment, provide evidence of their right to work in the UK
- All relevant staff and volunteers have a copy of the St Joseph's Parish Safeguarding policy available to them.
- St Joseph's Parish maintains a single central record of recruitment checks undertaken.

4. Responding to disclosure

Disclosures or information may be received from children, vulnerable adults, parents or other members of the public. We recognise that those who disclose such information may do so with difficulty, having chosen carefully to whom they will speak. Accordingly, all volunteers will handle disclosures with sensitivity. Such information cannot necessarily remain confidential as it will need to be shared with the relevant agencies as needed but should remain private (i.e. only shared with those who need to know). Staff or volunteers will immediately communicate what they have been told to the designated safeguarding leader for the event and make a contemporaneous record. They should not discuss with others outside the safeguarding team.

Volunteers will not investigate but will, wherever possible, listen, record and pass on information to the designated safeguarding lead or safeguarding representative of the Parish in order that s/he can make an informed decision of what to do next.

Staff/volunteers will:

- Listen to and take seriously any disclosure or information as serious.
- Reassure the child/person that they have done the right thing and provide support as far as possible.
- Clarify the information and immediately make a written record of what the child/vulnerable adult has said using the exact wording as reported by the child/ vulnerable adult. Do not substitute words. Include the date and time of the conversation.
- Try to keep questions to a minimum and of an 'open' nature e.g. 'Can you tell me what happened?' 'Is there anything else I should know?' rather than 'Did x hit you?' Let them tell you what they want to tell and no more. They may need to have to disclose to a specialist later and too much detail now may interfere with later investigations.
- Try not to show signs of shock, horror or surprise.
- Not express feelings or judgements regarding any person alleged to have harmed the child or vulnerable adult.
- Not promise confidentiality. Explain sensitively to the person that they have a responsibility to refer the information to the designated safeguarding lead. eg 'I'm going to talk to someone else that will be able to help us'.
- Avoid alerting the potential perpetrator (either deliberately or inadvertently).
- Explain what will happen next that only those who 'need to know' will be told.

5. Allegations made against staff and volunteers of St Joseph's Parish

Any disclosure (i.e. when a specific allegation of abuse is made against a named individual working for or on behalf of St Joseph's Parish) and/or suspicion (i.e. when concern is expressed about abuse that may have taken place or be in prospect) will always be investigated and acted upon swiftly. The child or vulnerable adults' welfare will always be the paramount consideration, consequently any allegation will be reported to the diocesan safeguarding team and relevant statutory authorities, e.g. Police for investigation.

Any information offered in confidence will be received on the basis that it will be shared with relevant authorities on a need to know basis and not shared with anyone outside the safeguarding process.

St Joseph's Parish will be guided by the relevant statutory authority regarding the individual remaining in role whilst an investigation takes place. If removal from role is recommended by the relevant statutory authority, CSAS, in consultation with the Northampton diocese Safeguarding team, where possible, the individual will be suspended from duties on full pay for the duration of the investigation, which will be regarded as a neutral act and will not prejudice any internal investigation.

6. Reporting Incidents

If any member of the clergy, staff or volunteer suspects abuse, or if a child/young person or vulnerable adult makes a disclosure, or if a person external to St Joseph's Parish reports to St Joseph's Parish a suspicion or allegation relating to St Joseph's Parish employees, volunteers or activities, including activities carried out in partnership with St Joseph's Parish by other organisations, the following steps should be taken:

- Immediately record the incident/concern or report;
- Pass the report to the Parish Safeguarding team via Safeguarding@stjosephs.org.uk;
- Make sure they do not alert the alleged perpetrator to the report of the incident (as this may compromise the victim).

The reporting party should not undertake their own investigation but report the facts as known or reported to them to the safeguarding team.

The safeguarding team will assess and review within 48 hours. If urgent action is required to protect children, this will be done immediately. No employee or volunteer will prejudice their own standing or position within St Joseph's Parish by responsibly reporting potential or suspected child/vulnerable adult abuse.

7. Investigating and responding to Reports

St Joseph's Parish will act immediately, prioritising the safety of the child, young person or vulnerable adult, in the event of a concern or allegation of abuse being reported following the process:

- The parish safeguarding team will assess and review within 48 hours.
- The meeting will assess the concern/allegation and decide next steps, including who else needs to be informed. This might include the Diocesan or Religious Safeguarding Co-ordinator and/or, if appropriate, relevant personnel in statutory agencies, such as the Police or Social Services. After taking advice, parents or carers will also be informed, if appropriate. Apart from this, careful confidentiality will be observed;
- The meeting will instigate an investigation if it is thought there may have been a breach of organisational policy. The St Joseph's Parish safeguarding team will designate an investigating officer and will continue to guide and monitor the process;
- An investigation will gather evidence and interview relevant parties in order to establish the facts and make recommendations about action needed to be taken in relation to the staff member or volunteer, on improving policy and practice that may have contributed to the incident and reinforce St Joseph's Parish's safeguarding procedures.
- St Joseph's Parish's Safeguarding Representative will be informed and updated regarding the progress and outcome of the investigation.

8. Confidentiality

Children, young people and vulnerable adult's safety is paramount, and their confidentiality will be protected at all stages. All disclosures will be treated in confidence. Any St Joseph's Parish employee or volunteer who raises concerns of serious malpractice will be protected if they come forward with serious concerns, if they have raised the concern in good faith. Deliberate false allegations are a serious disciplinary offence and will be investigated in accordance with St Joseph's Parish's disciplinary procedure.

The subject of the complaint (alleged perpetrator) and all witnesses must co-operate fully and openly with internal and statutory investigations and hearings. Their confidentiality will be protected and information which could identify them will be shared on a 'need to know' basis only. Anyone who knowingly communicates confidential information about a case may be subject to disciplinary action.

If a St Joseph's Parish employee is the subject of a safeguarding allegation they may be immediately suspended on full pay until an investigation has been completed, subject to guidance from the relevant statutory authority. If a St Joseph's Parish Volunteer is the subject of an allegation of abuse they may be withdrawn from their work until an investigation has been completed. St Joseph's Parish will inform the statutory authorities. In both cases, it should be made clear that suspension does not imply prejudgment of the investigation outcome but rather protects all parties while an investigation is undertaken.

If an unsubstantiated suspicion is expressed, the investigating officer will gather evidence in order to undertake a risk assessment and then take appropriate action, which may involve contacting statutory authorities.

Policy Ownership

This policy is owned by the Parish Safeguarding team lead by the Parish Priest as safeguarding lead. The policy will be reviewed annually and re-issued.

| Date | Version | Document Approver | Comment |
|--------------|-----------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 27 July 2021 | 0.1 draft | Parish Safeguarding Team | To be updated annually |

