

Safeguarding Report for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting to be held on 12/05/24

Jesus' command to love one another sets a high standard for us to follow in our relationships with other people and gives us meaning to the word 'safeguarding'. [John 13:34]

It is important that everyone who comes to Church is treated with dignity and respect and feels safe from harm.

Why? Because we want people to have the opportunity to come to faith in Jesus & to feel accepted and comfortable to join in with worship and any other events we hold.

The role of the Parish Safeguarding Officer is to be the link between the Diocese of Rochester and the Parish Church. But the only way for safeguarding to be effective is for everyone who worships at the churches in the Parish to take responsibility for creating a safe environment and to be prepared to report any safeguarding concerns they may have.

This report is an opportunity to acknowledge and thank everyone for all you do to make our churches safer. Collectively, this comes to many hours of commitment and service. Our church groups could not function without you. Thank you also for complying with the SG training requirements. I am aware that the courses, which are informative and necessary, can also be daunting for some people.

The Parochial Church Council has responsibility for ensuring the Safeguarding Policy of the Parish is carried out. From time to time, the safeguarding team prepares policy documents to be presented to the PCC for approval and acceptance. Currently, we are considering a policy on lone working and how to keep safe those people who carry out visits on behalf of the Church.

Thanks go to Ben, Wendy, Alyson & Paul for the work they do to help safeguard the congregations. As a team, we aim to create a safe environment in all four churches; to report and manage safeguarding concerns; and to plan for future events.

The work with children, young people and vulnerable adults, led by Alyson, forms a major part of our discussions. Paul supervises the recruitment of volunteers and helpers; checks and records information about an individual's safeguarding training; & advises on all aspects of DBS checks. DBS checks are now being carried out every 3 years, not every 5 years as previously.

On occasions and for special reasons, we may need to call on the support of the Church Wardens, Deputy Wardens, Duty Wardens, Welcomers and others to assist us with safeguarding, and we are very grateful to them for their willingness to follow the advice we are given by the Diocese.

From this brief account, one cannot avoid the conclusion that a vast number of people give their time, skills and commitment to serving God in the Church and acting out Jesus' command to love one another.

Since I took on the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer six months ago, we have had to manage a few situations which require considerable input from the Safeguarding Team. If we are aware that someone has difficulty engaging with the church for whatever reason, we try to find a way forward taking into account the need to safeguard the congregation as a whole.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors are there to give us advice and support on any safeguarding matter. We are in frequent contact with them and are very grateful to have the benefit of their expertise and wisdom.

Although safeguarding has a high priority in this Parish, we cannot afford to be complacent. The recent independent report on safeguarding commissioned by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, found the Church of England to be falling below the expected standards as compared to other organisations. In 2018, over 2,500 serious safeguarding concerns were reported. In her conclusion, Professor Jay recommended a complete change in the way safeguarding is organised within the Church of England which is now tasked to set up two new independent charities to administer safeguarding.

If you have a safeguarding concern, please do not hesitate to report it. There is further safeguarding information on the Parish website and a report form which can be downloaded electronically and returned to me.

Thank you.

Pam Calvert. [Parish Safeguarding Officer]