

SAFEGUARDING REPORT 2025

We cannot afford to ignore the impact the Makin Report has had since it was published in November 2024. It describes how the Church of England mishandled allegations of abuse committed by John Smyth QC, a barrister involved in Christian children's ministry through the Iwerne Camps in the 1970s and 1980s.

The report highlighted the failure to report concerns which some people were aware of at that time. In 2013 new information emerged about Smyth but the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, failed to check this had been followed up which resulted in his resignation in January this year.

You may have asked yourself why John Smyth was able to influence so many young boys. Mark Stibbe who was abused by him wrote:- "First and foremost the abuse was 'spiritual abuse'. Without the spiritual dimension to his behaviour, there would have been no abuse at all".

For us, there are **four lessons** from this very serious failure in safeguarding:-

1. If we attend the Church and have any safeguarding concerns, **we have a responsibility to report them**. This may not be something you feel comfortable doing; you may be unsure of the facts; you may be worried about the possible consequences & what the outcome could be. But in the light of the Makin Report we can see why reporting is so important.
2. The second lesson is to **be sure your concerns have been taken seriously & followed up**. In the first instance, you can report safeguarding concerns to the Parish Safeguarding Officer or to anyone in the Safeguarding Team. We will do everything we can to ensure your concerns are taken seriously & followed up.
3. **We need to be aware of the impact any type of abuse can have on survivors &, where appropriate, seek ways of supporting them.**
4. As a church, we have a responsibility to **ensure that anyone who has a role in the Church completes safeguarding training**.

The Safeguarding Team consists of Rev'd Ben Thorndike, Vicar; Rev'd Wendy Carr; Alyson Bleakley; Pam Calvert, Parish Safeguarding Officer. Paul White is the Lead Recruiter and Alison Minton provides our administrative support. We aim to meet every two months and at other times depending on the need. We work closely with the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors who support us whenever we encounter safeguarding issues in the Parish.

One of our tasks is to prepare policies which are related to safeguarding and we have recently been working on a 'Lone Workers Policy' to present to the PCC for approval. There are boundaries in home visiting which people may not be aware of and this is why the policy is very important. It aims to safeguard those who work alone, either in a church building or in someone's home & also to safeguard those who are receiving a visit.

The Makin Report raised awareness of the need to safeguard people who come to church and use church spaces. It has had one positive effect in that many people in our Parish have since completed one or more of the online safeguarding courses. I am very aware that for some people, completing these courses may not have been that straightforward but I admire their commitment & perseverance.

However, safeguarding training is of little use if people do not follow the guidelines therefore we all need to be alert and be committed to reporting any concerns we may have.

A huge thank you to everyone who contributes towards providing a safe church community for us all.

Pam Calvert

Parish Safeguarding Officer.