

**All Saints Church, Wokingham**  
**Report of the Safeguarding Team**  
**To the Annual Church Meeting**  
**To be held on 15 June 2021**

**Introduction**

The Covid 19 crisis of last 18 months has had a significant impact on the activities of All Saints Church and safeguarding is no exception. The safeguarding team has continued to attend to issues as they have arisen but now that 'activities in person' are re-starting we will need to focus in getting fully up to speed on some aspects of our safeguarding. In particular, our safeguarding database needs to be updated as we get confirmation from church groups on volunteers who are currently active. We anticipate that a good number of volunteers will need updated DBS checks and training. The Diocese Safeguarding Team has updated and extended on-line safeguarding training, including new training on Domestic Violence. The Team has also requested that local church PCCs specifically reflect on two serious abuse cases which occurred in the diocese: one involving the emotional and financial exploitation and murder of an older church member, the other was classified as 'spiritual abuse' of a teenager. Changes in the safeguarding group are reported below but we wish to take this opportunity to thank Judi Arnold for her years of faithful service as Children's Officer and Joint Safeguarding Officer at All Saints.

**1. DBS**

1.1. In accordance with Diocesan requirements Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks should be undertaken every five years for volunteers working with vulnerable people (children and young people and Adults at risk of harm).

1.2. The safeguarding database at October 2020 records 67 volunteers in church groups at All Saints. Not all qualify for DBS checks and there are some roles that require specific checking with the Diocese Safeguarding Team and APCS (our DBS provider) to clarify if the role qualifies for DBS.

1.3. Following advice from APCS (our DBS checkers) they advise that bereaved people are not classed as vulnerable adults, so do not offer DBS checking for members of the bereavement support group. The Oxford Diocese Safeguarding Team suggested that guidance from Gloucester Diocese is more comprehensive than the current Oxford Diocese guidance and so this is being consulted.

1.4. Under the requirements of the Charities Commission, trustees for charities which provide services for children are required to have an Enhanced DBS check (without barring) and so we now require PCC members to have DBS checks. Many PCC members already have DBS checks relating to other roles at All Saints.

1.5. Two DBS checks for volunteers have been completed since the time of the last report. We will need to undertake a major update of the DBS list as groups become active again/new groups form when Covid 19 restrictions are lifted.

1.5. It is diocesan policy that volunteers with out of date DBS checks should be told by their group leader to cease practice until they meet these requirements.

1.6. It is diocesan policy that DBS checks which volunteers have already from activities outside their church should not be 'transported' to their church roles.

1.6. The cost of undertaking DBS checks for church volunteers is £4/check.

1.7. We need to review how we store personal information in the safeguarding database in order to ensure that we are compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation.

## **2. Safeguarding Training**

2.1. All volunteers (whether qualifying for DBS checks or not) are required to undertake Safeguarding Training every three years.

2.2. Then last 'in person' Safeguarding Training event took place in the Cornerstone on 9th November 2019.

2.3 Several volunteers informed us that they could not make that date and it was proposed that we run another in-person training session in early 2020 but Covid 19 restrictions prevented that event.

2.4 As in-person activities at Christchurch re-commence we will need review training needs and promote on-line training as it appears that it may be some time before in-person Safeguarding Training will be available.

2.5. The Diocese offers in-person and on-line Safeguarding Training free of charge.

## **3. Safeguarding Group (Appointing Body)**

3.1. The diocese advises that churches should have a standing Safeguarding Group. For All Saints this is the 'Appointing Body' and consist of Safeguarding Officers, Rev Canon David Hodgson & Rev Hannah Higginson. For the period of Hannah's maternity leave, Hazel Todd has kindly agreed to join the Appointing Body.

3.2. Rev Higginson and Tom Lochhead have attended the Domestic Abuse training which is offered to clergy and safeguarding officers. The Diocese Safeguarding Team is concerned that this issue has been under-recognised in the past and is urging that local churches take a proactive approach to raise awareness of domestic abuse and to provide sensitive and active responses to this.

3.3. Judi Arnold has resigned from the roles of Children's Officer and Joint Safeguarding Officer. A female volunteer has agreed to take up the role of Children's Advocate and we are currently completing the appointing process.

3.4. David Chapman, previous Safeguarding Officer in All Saints, has returned to Wokingham and expressed his willingness to support our safeguarding work again.

## **4. Covid 19 impact**

4.1. Covid 19 restrictions have had a major impact on All Saints' activities.

4.2. As in-person activities recommence/new activities start it is important that group leaders keep the Safeguarding Officers up to date with the comings and goings of volunteers and that the

Safeguarding Officers liaise with group leaders so can keep up to date records and ensure appropriate DBS checks and training are provided. The Safeguarding Officers request that group leaders encourage their volunteers to make themselves available for training.

## **5. Safeguarding Agreements**

5.1. The diocese Safeguarding Team provides support to churches in situations where a person who has a history of presenting risk of abusing wishes to join or continue in a church congregation. A key part of addressing these situations is through the use of Safeguarding Agreements which set out how the church and the person will work together to enable the person in their faith journey whilst ensuring the safety of others. In the last year there have been two occasions when Safeguarding Agreements have been considered but were not in the end required to be put into action as the persons did not attend or become involved in All Saints Church.

## **6. Parish Safeguarding Policy.**

6.1. The Parish Safeguarding Policy was updated and approved by the PCC on 01 December 2020. The main change is that the Oxford Diocese Safeguarding Adviser is now Richard Woodley (email: [richard.woodley@oxford.anglicasn.org](mailto:richard.woodley@oxford.anglicasn.org) Tel: 01865 208290).

6.2. The Policy will need to be updated and approved by the PCC once the appointment of a Children's Advocate is confirmed.

Tom Lochhead – Safeguarding Officer

31/05/21