



ANNUAL REPORT ON SAFEGUARDING TO THE APCM 2024

The profile of safeguarding in churches is higher than ever before and for good reason.

In December 2023 the Future of Church Safeguarding Report was published following the commission of this piece of work by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. It does not make comfortable reading, but the Church is committed to implementing the recommendations. The report is critical of Safeguarding practises within the Church of England and recommends a that a fully independent body (funded by the Church of England) is created to oversee and scrutinize safeguarding policy, practice, protocols and procedures. The full report can be accessed by clicking on the link below.

<https://futureofchurchsafeguarding.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/FINAL-FOCS.pdf>

At St Pauls and in the Benefice safeguarding is taken very seriously and every concern or enquiry is listened to and assessed, even if the enquiry is not actually related to a safeguarding issue per se; the discussions and consciousness raising as to what safeguarding looks like is part of the process, as safeguarding is everyone's business whether they have a role in church or not.

Thankfully, those who seek to abuse children and vulnerable adults are in the minority, they do exist in numbers, and they seek out churches and other organisations where safeguarding practice is weak. Their activities go on in secret and they are generally very skilful at gaining trust. It must be noted that, although public and general awareness is often focused on children, it is now more common to receive referrals regarding vulnerable adults.

Whilst some people may question why their role requires Basic Awareness training and resist it, it is important to remember that most volunteers within the church potentially come into contact with children or vulnerable adults where there may be safeguarding concerns. The short online Basic Awareness training helps volunteers to recognise safeguarding situations and is also the stepping stone to Foundation and Leadership training, should the role require it.

This Year:

The PSO role was expanded to encompass the other churches in the benefice.

Safeguarding data:

As of March 18th, 2024

There were 71 people with DBS certificates and renewals are up to date on a month by month basis.

Thanks to Sara Hubbard Sawyer for taking on the DBS Admin role and all the ministry leads for their support. Thanks especially to everyone who volunteers in St Paul's to help us fulfil our vision to Show the Light and Love of Jesus and to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Annual Safeguarding Statement

I can confirm that the PCC has complied with its duty under Section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

Anne Hignell

Parish Safeguarding Officer

St Paul's Letchworth

18th March 2024