

# High Downs Parish

Within the Benefice of Kingsdown, Creekside and High Downs

## Policy Statement



## Responding to Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations

Procedure for dealing with Allegations and Concerns

Managing Safeguarding Allegations and Concerns

All information is within the new safeguarding CofE e-manual

# Policy and Procedure for responding to safeguarding concerns or allegations

The PCC has adopted the guidance of the church of England house of Bishops.

At High Downs Parish we will endeavour to respond promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation. The parish must report any safeguarding concerns or allegations to the DSA within 24 hours of a concern arising DSA's will advise on how to respond well. They will manage all concerns or allegations against Church officers.

We will follow the guidelines on all occasions and the further guidance as required.

The guidelines can be found on the church of England safeguarding webpages which is summarised in this policy document.

The Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) or relevant person will follow the CofE Guidelines, which can be found on the CofE website.

## **Practice Guidance: Responding to Safeguarding Concerns or Allegations that relate to Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults.**

St. Mary, Eastling  
St. Mary, Stalisfield  
St. Michael and All Angels, Throwley

Approved by the High Downs PCC meeting of: 22nd September 2025

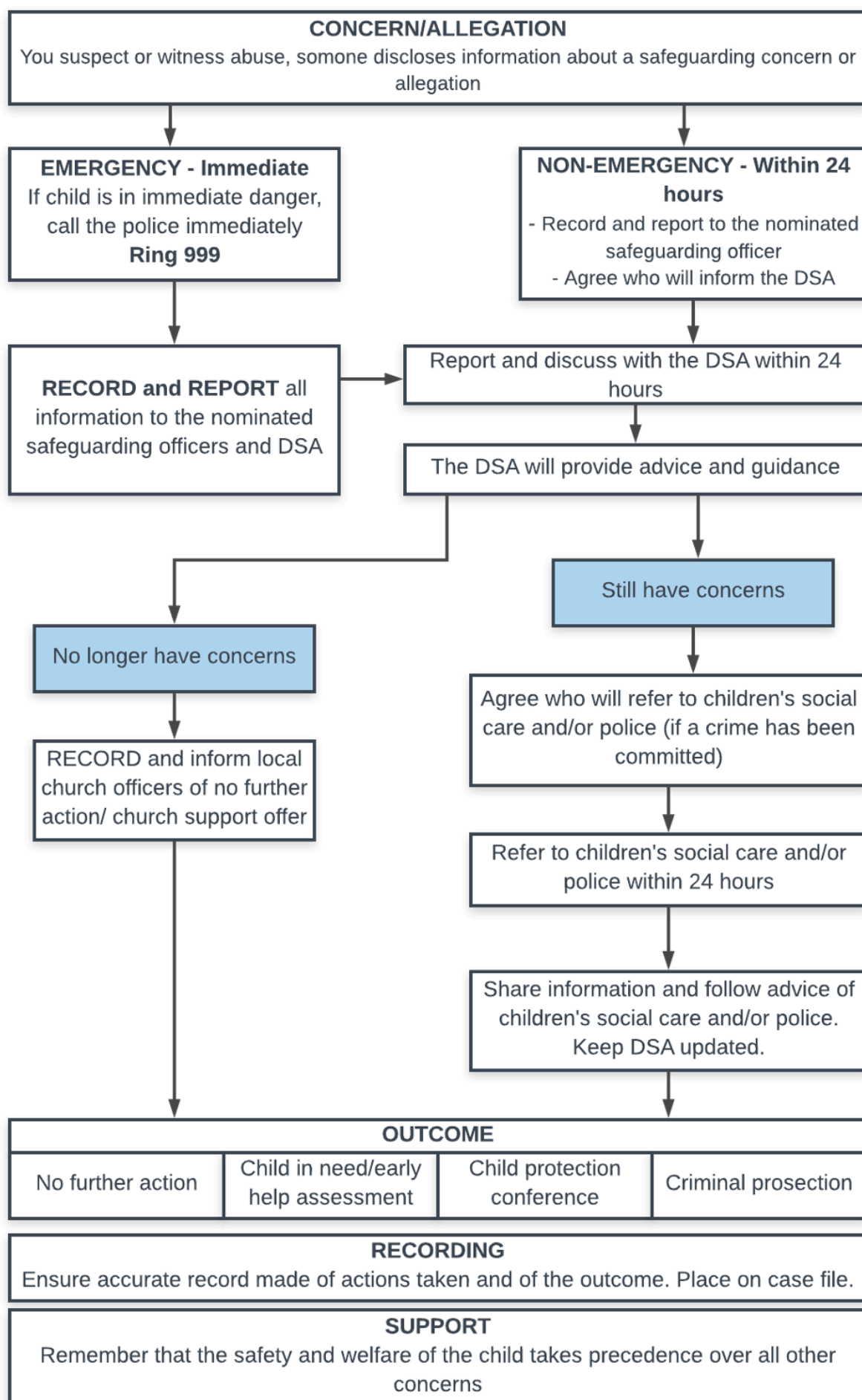
Signed by the PCC Chair:.....

Date of Issue: 22nd September 2025

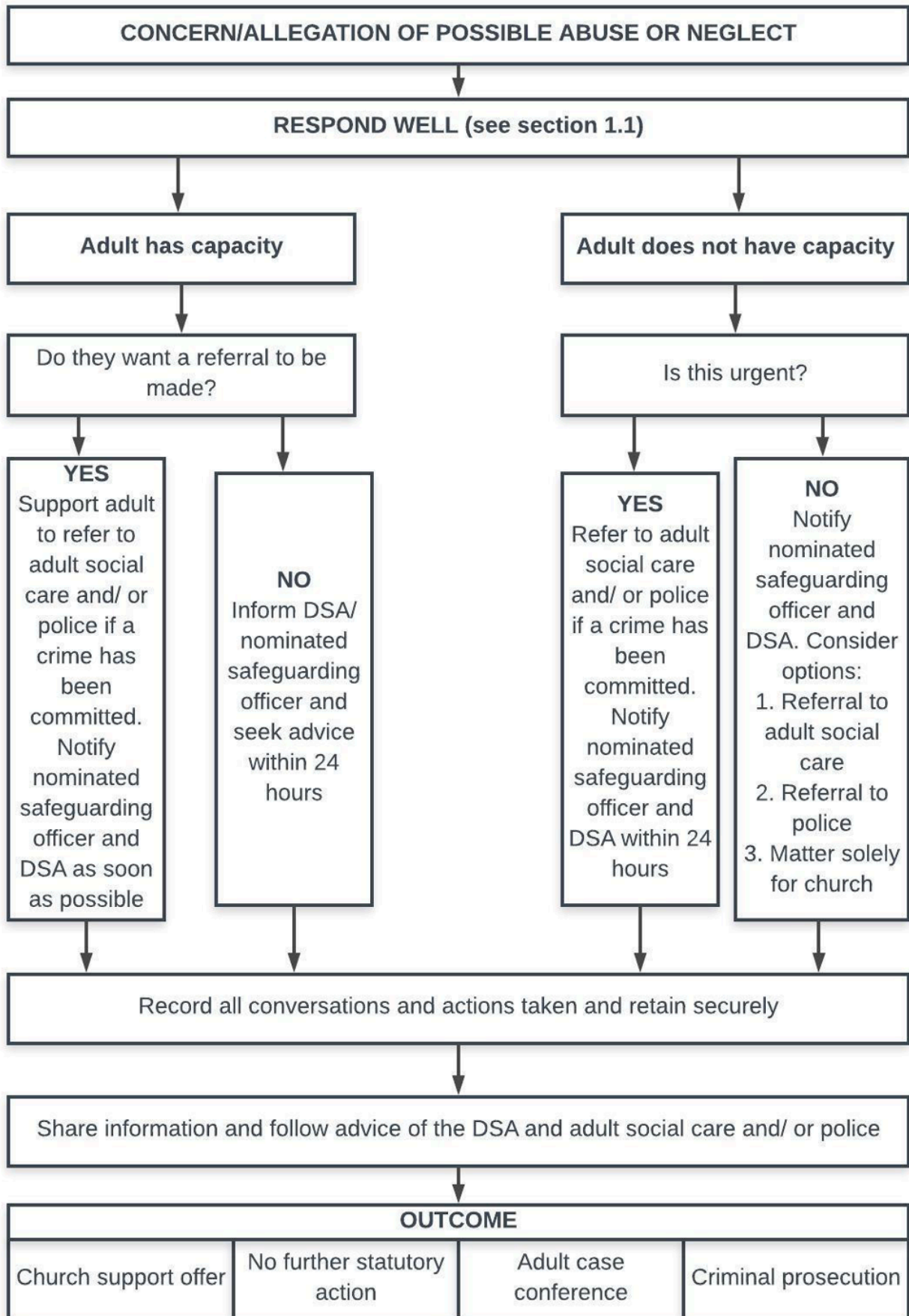
Review Date: July 2026

Further updates required will be added as an addendum.

## 7.1 Quick Guide: Child or Young Person



## Quick Guide: For an Adult



**Please note, if an adult is at risk of immediate harm, take yourself out of danger and call the police. Ring 999.**

## 7.2 What to do if you are concerned about a child or adult and/or you are concerned that a church officer<sup>32</sup> may be abusing a child or adult<sup>33</sup>


If you have a concern that a child or adult is or may be being abused, or that a church officer is or may be abusing a child or adult<sup>34</sup> (see sections 3 and 4 for information on types of abuse):

1. Respond well to the victim/survivor, if it is a direct disclosure, to ensure they feel listened to and taken seriously. Explain what will happen next and check out support requirements. They should be informed that their identity and the identity of the respondent<sup>35</sup> will be shared with key church officers<sup>36</sup>, and may be shared with the statutory agencies<sup>37</sup>, if there is any current risk to children or adults. The concern or allegation should not be shared with anyone other than those who need to know (e.g. the statutory agencies and appropriate church officers – see endnote 36) (see section 7.3).
2. **Emergency:** If you believe a child or adult is in immediate danger of significant or serious harm, contact the emergency services on 999.
3. **Non-emergency:** Contact the Parish Safeguarding Officer or incumbent, in the first instance. They **must** then contact the DSA. If neither are available, contact the DSA directly<sup>38</sup>. If the concern arises in an activity, discuss with the group/activity leader, who will contact the Parish Safeguarding Officer or incumbent.
4. Any safeguarding concerns **must** be reported to the DSA **within 24 hours**.

5. If the PSO/incumbent or the DSA are not available within 24 hours, contact Children's Social Care or Adult Social Care<sup>39</sup> and/or the police directly, if the concern is that a child or adult is being abused. Contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)<sup>40</sup> and/or police if the concern is that a church officer may be abusing a child or adult.

Advise the Parish Safeguarding Officer or incumbent as soon as possible that you have made a referral; they will advise the DSA.

**If in doubt don't delay – seek advice from statutory agencies.**

6. Do not contact the respondent<sup>41</sup> or anyone who may be implicated in the allegation or disclosure, even if they would normally be contacted as part of the procedure, until advice has been sought from the DSA or statutory agencies<sup>42</sup>.
7. Record the details of the concern or allegation. Where it is not appropriate to take notes at the time (usually it will not be), make a written record as soon as possible afterwards or before the end of the day. Record the time, date, location, persons present and how the concern or allegation was received, e.g. by telephone, face-to-face conversation, letter, etc. The record should include details of information provided to that person as well as the information received. Always sign and date the record. Keep it factual. Pass on a copy to the DSA (and/or the PSO/incumbent). The records should be kept secure and confidential (please see Model Parish Recording Template ).

**If the concern is about a child or adult:**

8. The DSA will act in line with the House of Bishops' guidance. They will offer advice, support and guidance and help to make



the required referrals. If there is a risk of harm, the concerns must be reported to the statutory agencies within 24 hours of the DSA receiving the concerns. This would be Children's or Adult Social Care and/or the police.

There should be close communication between the DSA and PSO/incumbent until the situation is resolved. The archdeacon should also be informed.

**If the concern also involves a church officer:**

9. The DSA will act in line with the House of Bishops' guidance. They will offer advice, support and guidance and refer the concerns to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and/or police within 24 hours. The DSA will now take over the management of the safeguarding concern in conjunction with the core group (which will be convened within 48 hours) and statutory agencies. There may also be a requirement for parish representatives to attend a subsequent core group/s. If there are doubts about whether or not to make a referral and under what route, the DSA will seek advice from the LADO.

Please note that the procedure is the same for non-recent abuse<sup>43</sup>.

A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and adults, and respecting the rights of the person against whom an allegation is made. In such circumstances the welfare of the child, young person or adult must come first. The rights of the person against whom the allegation is made are important and must be given due weight, once the immediate safety and protection of the child, young person or vulnerable adult have been assured.

## 7.3 Guidelines for responding to a person disclosing abuse

### Respond

#### **Do:**

- Listen.
- Take what is said seriously.
- Only use open questions (open questions begin with words like: who, what, when, where and how. Open questions cannot be answered with a 'yes' or 'no').
- Remain calm.
- Take into account the person's age and level of understanding.
- Check, if face to face, whether they mind you taking notes while they talk so you can make sure you capture the information accurately. At the end you can check with them that you have understood everything correctly.
- Offer reassurance that disclosing is the right thing to do.
- Establish only as much information as is needed to be able to tell your activity leader/ Parish Safeguarding Officer/ DSA and statutory authorities what is believed to have happened, when and where.
- Check what the person hopes to happen as a result of the disclosure.
- Tell the child or adult what you are going to do next.

#### **Do not:**

- Make promises that cannot be kept (e.g. that you won't share the information).
- Make assumptions or offer alternative explanations.
- Investigate.
- Contact the person about whom allegations have been made.
- Do a physical or medical examination.



## Record

- Make some very brief notes at the time, if appropriate, and write them up in detail as soon as possible.
- Do not destroy your original notes in case they are required by the DSA or the statutory authorities.
- Record the date, time, place and actual words used, including any swear words or slang.
- Record facts and observable things, not your interpretations or assumptions.
- Don't speculate or jump to conclusions.


## Report

- If there is immediate danger to a child or adult contact the police.
- Otherwise report to your activity leader/Parish Safeguarding Officer/incumbent immediately.
- Within 24 hours the PSO/incumbent reports the concerns to the DSA.
- The DSA will advise regarding reporting to statutory agencies within 24 hours.
- If there is any doubt seek advice from Children's/Adult's Social Care or the police.

## 7.4 Non-recent abuse

Safeguarding concerns or allegations may be about something that is going on now and/or something that may happen in the future (recent) or something that happened in the past (non-recent). Non-recent allegations of abuse must be treated as seriously as recent allegations. Research evidences that it may take up to 25 years or longer for an adult to disclose sexual abuse that happened to him/her either as a child or younger adult. A victim/survivor needs to be aware that if a respondent is known to be currently working with children/vulnerable adults in either a paid or voluntary capacity a referral to the statutory services will be made. The DSA will make this referral<sup>44</sup>.

## 7.5 Domestic abuse<sup>45</sup>

The House of Bishops' policy states that *'The Church is committed to those who have been victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse in all its forms is contrary to the will of God and an affront to human dignity. All need to play their part in preventing or halting it'*. The welfare of the adult victim of domestic abuse is important, but where there are children in the family it must be understood that they too are victims of domestic abuse. Consideration of the child's welfare always comes first. In all circumstances, contact the DSA who will help clarify the issues and steps needed, which may involve contacting Children's Social Care. There may be a need for a risk assessment and for a Safeguarding Agreement  to be put in place. The DSA will undertake this work in conjunction with the parish church and any statutory agencies (see section 10).

### **What do you need to do in a parish?**

- PCC to agree a parish domestic abuse statement including who to contact if there are concerns.
- Appoint a named individual who is a point of contact for any advice and support. This may be the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO).
- Follow the process on how to respond to safeguarding concerns or allegations.
- Support those in leadership positions, pastoral and safeguarding roles to engage in diocesan domestic abuse training.
- Consider the best place to display the domestic abuse statement including information about helplines and local services.
- Discuss domestic abuse in appropriate contexts such as marriage preparation.
- Challenge inappropriate comments and behaviour by church members.

### **Recommended good practice:**

- Encourage leaders and those who preach to speak against domestic abuse in teaching, sermons, prayers and parish magazines – remember that many of the congregation may have personal experience of domestic abuse.
- Offer some awareness-raising activities e.g. invite speakers from local domestic abuse agencies.
- Consider including activities around healthy relationships within activities for children and young people.
- Develop links with local domestic abuse organisations.
- Organise courses in parenting and confidence-building.

## **7.6 Ministry of deliverance**


Concerns may be expressed that a child, young person or adult is troubled by or possessed by evil spirits or demons and that this may account for behavioural issues in the individual or be considered to justify harsh treatment by the family, guardians, friends or carers.

If a church officer, including a member of clergy, becomes aware of the above situation and/or a request is made for deliverance ministry, the parish **must** contact the **DSA** who will contact the appropriate person.

## **7.7 Recording, data protection and information sharing**

### **Opening a church safeguarding case file**

Good record keeping is an important part of the safeguarding task. A record, called a case file, should be opened whenever a safeguarding concern or allegation occurs in a church. The record should include key

contact details, dates of when the information became known and the nature of the concerns. The record should include ongoing actions with dates, other key documents on the case file (e.g. observation notes, reports, consent forms etc.) and the case closure date. Records should use straightforward language and be concise and accurate so that they can be understood by anyone not familiar with the case. Please see Model Parish Recording Template .

## **Record retention and security**

The safeguarding case files, whether electronic or paper, must be stored securely by the incumbent and the PSO. This should include identifying who should have access to them. Records in relation to safeguarding issues, even if they have not been proven, should be maintained in accordance with the Church's retention guidance. If the incumbent moves from the church, the records should be passed to the new incumbent.

## **Data protection and information sharing**

In May 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 replaced the Data Protection Act 1998. The GDPR contains the principles governing the use of personal data. It should be noted that the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 place greater significance on organisations being accountable and transparent in relation to their use of personal data. Parishes handling personal data need to have the proper arrangements for collecting, storing and sharing information<sup>46</sup>.

Personal information in relation to safeguarding will often be sensitive and is likely to be classed as what is called 'special categories of personal data' under the GDPR, which means extra care will need to be taken when handling such data. Nevertheless, it is important to be aware that the Data Protection Act 2018 includes specific reference to processing data in relation to the 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' and allows



individuals to share, in certain situations, personal data without consent (see below)<sup>47</sup>.

*'The GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 do not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children and young people safe'* and this can equally be said to apply to vulnerable adults<sup>48</sup>.

## **Reporting concerns about adults**

Referrals of suspected abuse are made to Adult Social Services and the police. Where possible, for a person over 18, this should be done with their written consent.

The starting point is the presumption that an adult can give consent and has the mental capacity to do so. The provisions of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 are complex and questions and concerns about consent and mental capacity should always be discussed with the DSA.

## **Sharing without consent**

Information can be shared legally without consent, if a person is unable to or cannot reasonably be expected to gain consent from the individual concerned, or if to gain consent could place somebody at risk. Relevant personal data can be shared lawfully without consent if it is to keep a child or vulnerable adult safe from neglect or physical, emotional or mental harm, or if it is protecting their physical, mental or emotional well-being.

Never make these decisions on your own. If you are going to share personal data, this should always be discussed with the DSA. Of course, you may be able to share data, at least initially, without identifying the individual concerned both within the church and with the statutory services.

Ultimately, the most important consideration is whether the sharing of information is likely to support the safeguarding of a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

## 8. Caring Pastorally for Victims/Survivors of Abuse and Affected Others

The House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy 2017 states that *'The Church will endeavour to offer care and support to all those that have been abused, regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred ... Those who have suffered abuse within the Church will receive a compassionate response, be listened to and be taken seriously. Our first response to those who have suffered abuse, especially abuse within the Church, should be compassionate; we must listen and take what we are hearing seriously.'*

Most parishes are likely to have amongst their congregation children and young people who have been abused and/or adults who have experienced abuse, either as adults or when they themselves were children. Some may have been abused in the Church (see below).

Responding well to a disclosure of abuse is essential to being able to build trust and support (see section 7.3). For some, just being able to talk to a trusted person about their experiences can be a powerful, healing event. Some may be seeking pastoral support from the Church. Some may need advice about how best to seek professional help. This may involve support to access local specialist services. Victims/survivors who are children or young people will require specialist support. If you need any advice about how best to support a victim/survivor of abuse, please contact the DSA.

We journey alongside those who have been abused; for some, forgiveness may be a part of that journey, while for others, it may not be so. In any event, there should not be any pressure or expectation from the church on the victim/survivor to forgive<sup>49</sup>.



## Support following alleged abuse by a church officer

All concerns or allegations of abuse by a church officer must be reported to the DSA (see section 7.2). The DSA will arrange for a **Support Person** to be offered to all alleged adult victims/survivors. The role of the Support Person is set out in the House of Bishops' guidance<sup>50</sup>. What the Support Person offers will be agreed with the alleged victim/survivor, but it is likely they will:

- Listen to and represent the victim/survivor's pastoral needs.
- Identify any therapeutic or other needs and offer choices as to how these best be met.
- Record any meetings or contact they have with the victim/survivor.
- Share relevant information with the DSA.

Victims/survivors who are children or young people will require specialist support. The DSA will seek advice from Children's Social Care to access support from a professional agency, as required.

Support for families of victims/survivors and for the parish is co-ordinated by the core group in conjunction with statutory agencies. This would involve discussion with the Parish Safeguarding Officer, incumbent and archdeacon as appropriate.

In addition, dioceses have access to specialist support services for victims/survivors of abuse. This may be through a Diocesan Authorised Listener or a commissioned external service. The nature of any ongoing support needs will be agreed by the DSA with the victim/survivor<sup>51</sup>.

## 9. Caring Pastorally for Church Officers who are the Subject of Concerns or Allegations of Abuse and Affected Others

### 9.1 Support for the respondent<sup>52</sup>

Support for the respondent is provided by a Link Person. All church officers who are the subject of a concern will be offered a Link Person.

The statutory agencies, where involved, will inform the DSA about when and what they can tell the respondent about an allegation that has been made. It may be that the statutory agencies themselves inform the respondent as part of their own investigative practices i.e. where a voluntary interview or arrest is necessary.

Where the statutory agencies are not involved, the core group will determine when and what the respondent should be told. This will normally be done by the diocesan bishop's nominated representative and the DSA, at an arranged meeting with the respondent. At this meeting the respondent will also be offered a Link Person and the support needs of the respondent's family will be considered.

The role of the Link Person is set out in the House of Bishops' guidance<sup>53</sup>. What the Link Person offers will be agreed with the respondent, but it is likely he/she will:

- Keep the person up to date with the progress of their case.
- Help with access to advice and additional support.
- Make and keep a written record of any meetings or contact with the respondent and share relevant information with the DSA.

For clergy or lay workers whose accommodation is provided by the Church, alternative temporary accommodation for the respondent may need to be considered by the diocese.

## **9.2 Support to parishes and others affected by safeguarding concerns or allegations**

When a member of clergy leaves a parish in which they have lived and worked for some time, there is usually a period of notice during which they can take their leave and parishioners can say their goodbyes. The pastoral relationship between the respondent and parishioners can be very close, so when it is ending it is to be expected that there will be some sense of loss and sadness; but there is also an opportunity to mark their departure.

When someone in a position of office or ministry must step aside at short notice or is suspended because of a safeguarding concern or allegation, a crisis arises for them, but also for the parishioners who have had no warning. The feelings that can arise for parishioners in these circumstances can be very varied and can include disbelief about the allegation, defensiveness about the respondent, shock, disappointment, anger and confusion. People can feel abandoned, especially if they had been working closely with that person in some element of parish life.

The core group will advise the DSA, in close liaison with the archdeacon, who should support the affected parish.

During the period of investigation, which may last for many months, the information that can be shared with the parish and its congregation will be limited. Advice and support are available from the DSA, the archdeacon and the Diocesan Communications Officer.

## 10. Responding to Those who May Present a Known Risk to Children, Young People or Vulnerable Adults within a Christian Congregation<sup>54</sup>

The House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy 2017 states, *'The Church, based on the message of the gospel, opens its doors to all. It will therefore endeavour to offer pastoral care and support to any member of the church community whom may present a known risk.'*

This means that there are likely to be those with criminal convictions for sexual offences and other forms of abuse attending church. In addition, there may be those who do not have convictions or cautions but where there are sound reasons for considering that they still might pose a risk to others. Where people may pose a risk to others, their position in a congregation will need to be carefully and sensitively assessed to decide whether they pose a present risk to others and to put in place arrangements to ensure that these risks are mitigated. In these circumstances it is not only about monitoring individuals but offering support to lead a fulfilled life. As such, the Church has an important role in contributing to the prevention of future abuse.

Some examples of the risk that individuals may pose to children, young people and adults are:

- **Sexual offences – against both adults and children:** this includes accessing indecent images of children on the internet.
- **Financial abuse:** targeting of vulnerable adults for financial gain, for example, asking for money, the acceptance of large 'gifts' or offering to do a job for someone at an extortionate rate of pay.

## Take action

Always contact the DSA as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours, if you learn that any of the following people worship in your church:

1. Anyone placed on the sex offenders register, with a violent offence or conviction and/or who is barred from working with children or adults by the Disclosure and Barring Service.
2. Anyone who admits to being an abuser including non-recent abuse.
3. Anyone who is subject to an investigation for suspected abuse, including possession of indecent images of children, and/or is suspended from their usual role.
4. Anyone who may pose a risk to other church members due to their behaviour, irrespective of their criminal status.


Category (4) may include a person in relation to whom:

- An allegation of abuse against a child or adult has been investigated, but the matter has not proceeded to court, or the person has been acquitted, or the matter is currently the subject of proceedings in the criminal or civil courts but the person may still pose a risk.



- A complaint or grievance has been received alleging inappropriate behaviour, which is not criminal.
- There have been concerns about the person's alleged abusive behaviour to a previous or current partner.


If the DSA is made aware by any other source of any person in the above categories who is intending to or is worshipping at a local parish church, he/she will notify the Parish Safeguarding Officer/incumbent in the first instance.

The DSA will determine the appropriate action to be taken to best safeguard the parish and its congregation, based on the particular facts and circumstances of each case. They will undertake a risk assessment and the formation of a risk management plan known as a Safeguarding Agreement .

This will involve the respondent and usually the incumbent, church warden, Parish Safeguarding Officer and, if involved, statutory agencies e.g. police, National Probation Service and Children's Social Care. Who is involved will depend on the case.

If a person is assessed as posing a risk to children or adults, the DSA, together with any statutory agencies involved, will support the parish to:

- Form a small group of people to offer pastoral support, friendship and to monitor the respondent.
- Maintain the highest levels of confidentiality unless there is a breach of the agreement and it is necessary to inform others to protect a child or vulnerable adult.
- Agree with the respondent that he/she worship elsewhere if his/her victim or their family worship in the same church.

- Ensure the respondent is never offered any official role in the church or position of responsibility where he/she may be trusted by others, for example that of church warden, worship leader or any in which a child or vulnerable adult may, as a result, place trust in that person.
- Consider whether, with the person's agreement and that of any statutory authorities involved, the congregation should be informed.
- Meet with the respondent to draft a Safeguarding Agreement , setting out the parameters of his/her behaviour in the church setting.

The Safeguarding Agreement may include the following elements:

- Attend designated services or meetings only.
- Sit apart from children.
- Stay away from areas of the building where children or vulnerable adults meet.
- Attend a house group where there are no children or vulnerable adults.
- Decline hospitality where there are children or vulnerable adults.
- Never be alone with children or vulnerable adults.
- Never work or be part of a mixed group with children or vulnerable adults.
- Take no role or office in the church which gives him or her status or authority as others may deem that person to be trustworthy.

The church wardens should be involved in the drawing up of the written agreement with the respondent. Church wardens can direct parishioners where to sit and have a duty to maintain good order at divine service. If necessary church wardens can eject a person creating a disturbance and

in certain circumstances have the power of arrest, although such power should be exercised with extreme caution<sup>55</sup>. If a 'disturbance' is anticipated the police must be notified.

The Safeguarding Agreement will be monitored and reviewed at least annually.

Should the respondent refuse to sign the agreement the DSA will advise the parish and liaise with the police and other relevant agencies, as required, to seek a resolution. Any breach should be shared with the DSA immediately, who will liaise with the statutory agencies, as required. It should be remembered that it is not possible to prevent a parishioner from attending divine service<sup>56</sup>, unless this is a condition included in a court order or in his/her licence conditions upon release from prison (although, of course, he/she could voluntarily agree not to attend certain services). If a respondent parishioner wishes to attend any service, as part of the safeguarding arrangement (and this could be contained in his/her ongoing Safeguarding Agreement), it is possible for the church wardens to direct a person where to sit, put measures in place to closely supervise them (e.g. accompany the individual) and remove that person if they cause a disturbance. It is also possible to refuse access to other church activities (e.g. social activities such as tea/coffee after the service and choir and bell ringing activities).

## Safeguarding Supplement to Main Policy

### RESPONDING PROMPTLY TO EVERY SAFEGUARDING CONCERN OR ALLEGATION

Please also refer to Section 7 in the Parish Safeguarding Handbook for further guidance and information as well as a quick flowchart guide.

If there are safeguarding concerns about a child or vulnerable adult the key message is to contact the DSA as soon as possible. Remember **DO NOT INVESTIGATE** and contact the DSA for advice and guidance.

In rare cases where immediate safety may be in jeopardy the police or Social Services should be contacted immediately.

If a child or adult needs urgent medical attention the appropriate emergency services should be called or the person taken to the nearest Accident and Emergency Department. The hospital staff should be told of any suspicions of abuse and the parish priest and/or Parish Safeguarding Officer informed as soon as possible. They **must** then inform the DSA.

If the person is not in immediate danger then concerns **must** be discussed immediately with either the parish priest or PSO. The DSA must be contacted too.

If there is uncertainty over whether abuse has occurred the same procedures apply. Concerns can always be discussed with the DSA without initially disclosing the names of the people involved.

The DSA will discuss and advise on how best to deal with the matter, in particular whether a referral should be made to Social Services and who should do that. This would normally be done by the DSA, although this can also be done by the parish.

If there are doubts about whether or not to make the referral and under what route, a consultation can be sought with Children's Social Services. Consultations and referrals would normally be initiated by the DSA.



## CARING PASTORALLY FOR ALLEGED VICTIMS / SURVIVORS OF ABUSE

Careful consideration will need to be given to the role that the parish has to support the victim of abuse and in some cases their family too. If the statutory agencies are involved in undertaking an investigation this should be done in consultation with them. It may also be appropriate to consider support for the person referring the matter and for the alleged perpetrator – although those providing such support should be different for each of these individuals.

### The Authorised Listener

Authorised Listeners provide an attentive and attuned ear to help individuals reflect on their feelings, assist in thinking about their next step and generally provide them with support. The Diocese has appointed a group of Authorised Listeners, all of whom are qualified professionals with counselling experience. They are able to offer up to 4 sessions free of charge. Any request for an Authorised Listener must be made via the DSA. Parishes are encouraged to draw attention to this service on their parish notice boards.



# New Managing Safeguarding Allegations Short Summary.

Culture, Leadership and Capacity

Prevention

Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk

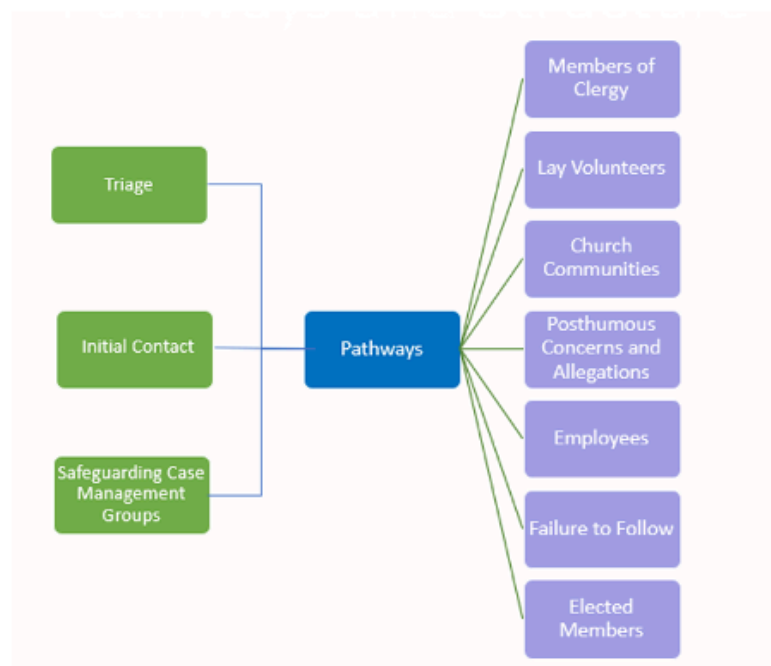
Victims and Survivors

Learning, Supervision and Support

## Quick Takeaway

Every safeguarding case follows a structured six-step process—from fast triage and compassionate support to formal decision-making, tailored intervention, and careful closure with ongoing learning. **The Diocesan Safeguarding Officer coordinates each step**, statutory agencies do necessary investigations, and the church ensures safety and accountability throughout.

## Pathway Model



## Key Principles

- **Put victims first** – Listen and support those affected.
- **Act quickly and clearly** – Concerns must be taken seriously and reported without delay.
- **Follow the law** – Cooperate with police and local authorities.
- **Fairness for all** – Support the person facing the allegation and ensure a proper process.

## Roles and Responsibilities

- **Anyone** who hears a concern must **report it immediately**.



- The **Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)** or **Incumbent** tells the **Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO)**.
- The **DSO** leads the response, works with other agencies (like police), and keeps records.
- The **bishop and diocesan team** support decision-making and risk management.

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### Primary significant change

- Introduction of a 'Failure to Follow'. This relates to a failure to follow the Church of England's Safeguarding Code of Practice<sup>1</sup>.
- The key messages in considering the Failure to Follow pathway the following:



NON-PUNITIVE AND  
PROPORTIONATE  
RESPONSE



ENCOURAGES REFLECTIVE  
PRACTICE AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY



CLEAR RECORDING AND  
MONITORING REQUIRED



ESCALATION IF  
ENGAGEMENT FAILS

- Escalation in terms of the Failure to Follow is only considered if it is felt by the DSO that there is a lack of learning.

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### Final Messages

- **Contact the police using 999 if someone is at immediate risk of harm**
- **This summary is not exhaustive please contact the DSO when an allegation is made** and they lead on the Managing Allegations processes and will assist in helping church officers and bodies understanding the processes being undertaken and why.
- **The full guidance can be found [here](#)**

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<sup>1</sup> [The Church of England's Safeguarding Code of Practice](#) is a set of guidelines designed to protect children and vulnerable adults within the church community. It outlines the responsibilities of church officers (all clergy, paid staff or any form of volunteer) and bodies to ensure a safe environment, including the requirement to report concerns promptly and cooperate with statutory agencies like the police. The Code of Practice is legally binding, meaning that all church officers must adhere to it, and failure to do so can result in disciplinary action under the Failure to Follow process.