

IT'S NOT JUST POLICY, IT'S PERSONAL

Building confidence in reporting
safeguarding concerns

*"Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with
your God."*

- Micah 6:8

We know that
reporting
safeguarding
concerns can feel
difficult

[Scan here for
resources to help
you](#)



When someone shares a concern, it is important they are listened to and taken seriously. You are not expected to investigate. Keeping people safe and ensuring concerns are recorded and referred appropriately is all of our responsibility.



Recognise

Be alert to signs or disclosures
of abuse.



Respond

Listen carefully and take
what is being said
seriously.



Record

Make a written record of
what has been shared.



Refer

Share the concern with the
Safeguarding Officer and
relevant authorities.

UNDERSTANDING HOW TO RESPOND TO SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

IT'S NOT JUST POLICY, IT'S PERSONAL



Introduction

Safeguarding is not just about following procedures. It is about how we respond when concerns are raised, and how we make sure that people are protected, supported and taken seriously.

At the centre of every safeguarding concern is a person. Someone who has taken a difficult step in sharing what they know or what they have experienced. How we respond to that moment matters enormously.

The [**Reporting Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations Code of Practice**](#) sets out clear expectations for how concerns must be handled across the Church. Keeping people safe is everyone's responsibility. Anyone in the church community may find themselves receiving a safeguarding concern, which means that everyone should feel confident in how to respond.

Safeguarding concerns can arise in many ways

Safeguarding concerns can arise in many ways. They may come through something someone shares with you directly, something you witness or observe, information passed on by another person, or concerns that emerge over time. They may relate to recent events or to things that happened many years ago. Whatever the circumstances, the same four steps apply.

Recognise. Respond. Record. Refer.

You are not expected to investigate. You are not expected to have all the answers. Your role is to take what you hear seriously, make a record and pass it on to the right people. The process is there to support you as much as anyone else.

If you are unsure about any part of this, your Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) is there to help.

A reminder for you

Receiving a safeguarding concern can be difficult. It is okay to find it hard. Once you have referred the concern, make sure you seek support for yourself too. Your DSO or a trusted colleague can help with this.

For more information, visit the [**Reporting Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations Code**](#) in the Safeguarding E-Manual.

**FOR MORE
INFORMATION**



What To Do When Safeguarding Concerns Arise

FAQ's

If it feels complicated, report it anyway

Reporting a safeguarding concern should be straightforward. And yet, for many Church Officers, something gets in the way.

More often it is doubt. A worry about getting it wrong, causing harm, or overstepping.

These hesitations are understandable. They are also worth naming, because they are some of the most common reasons concerns go unreported.



Recognise

Be alert to signs or disclosures of abuse.



Respond

Listen carefully and take what is being said seriously.



Record

Make a written record of what has been shared.



Refer

Share the concern with the Safeguarding Officer and relevant authorities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



IT'S NOT JUST POLICY, IT'S PERSONAL

What if it feels like interfering in someone's personal life?

When someone shares a concern with you, it is often because they want help and they are trusting you to act. A safeguarding concern is never just a private matter. You are not being asked to take sides or make a judgement, simply to pass it on so that someone trained to help can take it forward.

Keeping people safe is at the heart of what we are called to do. That is not interference. That is care.



What if I was told something in confidence, or asked to keep it a secret?

It takes courage for someone to share something difficult.

The *Reporting Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations Code of Practice* is clear that promises of confidentiality should not be made if they cannot be kept.

You can respond with care while explaining that the information may need to be shared to keep people safe.



What if it has already been reported?

Report it anyway.

You cannot know what has or has not been shared, and every account matters.

There is no such thing as reporting too many times when a person's safety is at stake.



What if it happened a long time ago?

Non-recent concerns are still concerns. Time does not change the obligation to refer, and it does not make what happened any less important to the person who experienced it.

If someone has questions about what happens next, be honest about the process. Your DSO can help you navigate that conversation.



What if it involves someone well-known or in a senior position?

We know this one can feel the hardest. The process exists precisely for moments like this.

Seniority does not change the process, and no one is above it. You will not be on your own.

Safeguarding professionals are there to support you.



What if I'm not sure it's serious enough, don't have enough information, or don't know the process?

It is common to feel unsure.

You do not need to know every step before you act.

Your DSO is there to guide you through what happens next.

The most important thing is that you make contact. Everything else can be worked out together.



What To Do When Safeguarding Concerns Arise



Safeguarding concerns can arise in many different situations. When they do, they must be Recognised, Responded to, Recorded and Referred.

SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS MAY ARISE THROUGH

- A disclosure from a child or adult
- Concerns raised by someone else
- Something you witness or observe
- Information shared during conversation
- Information that becomes known during recruitment or safeguarding checks

Always take concerns seriously. Even non-recent abuse must be reported to safeguarding professionals.



RECOGNISE

- Be alert to the signs or disclosures of abuse.

Not everyone will use safeguarding language when they share a concern. A disclosure may be indirect or tentative. If something does not feel right, take it seriously even if you are not certain of what you are hearing.



RESPOND

- Listen carefully, remain calm and allow the person to speak at their own pace. Do not investigate or ask leading questions.

Do not rush this conversation. Give the person time and space to share what they are ready to share. Let them know gently that as a Church Officer you have a safeguarding responsibility and that what they share may need to be passed on to keep people safe.



RECORD

- Make a written record of the concern as soon as possible, including what was said, who is involved and relevant details. Records must be signed, timed and dated.

Be open with the person about where their information will be recorded and who may see it. If you need to come back to them for further details, let them know. Clarity at this stage helps people feel respected and informed.



REFER

- Safeguarding concerns must be referred promptly to the Safeguarding Officer and relevant authorities. If there is immediate risk of harm, contact emergency services without delay

Where you can, let the person know who the concern is being referred to and why. If there is space, ask whether they have any preferences about next steps. Being heard at this stage matters. Your DSO is there to guide you through what happens next.



It's Not Just Policy, It's Personal: Barriers to Reporting Article

3-minute read

The short version: Reporting a safeguarding concern can feel complicated. This article names some of the most common reasons church officers hesitate, and why the [Reporting Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations Code](#) is there to support you through all of them.

Reporting a safeguarding concern should be straightforward. And yet, for many Church Officers, something gets in the way. More often it is doubt. A worry about getting it wrong, causing harm, or overstepping. These hesitations are understandable. They are also worth naming, because they are some of the most common reasons concerns go unreported.

- **What if it feels like interfering?**

When someone shares a concern with you, it is often because they want help. They are trusting you to do something with what they have shared. A safeguarding concern is never just a private matter, and you are not being asked to take sides or make a judgement. You are being asked to pass the concern on so that someone trained to help can take it from there. Keeping people safe and supported is at the heart of what we are called to do. That is not interference. That is care.

- **What if someone told you something in confidence, or asked you to keep it a secret?**

It takes courage for someone to share something difficult, and that matters. But a request for confidentiality cannot come before someone's safety. Referring is not a betrayal of trust. In many cases, it is the most caring thing you can do.

- **What if it happened a long time ago?**

Non-recent concerns are still concerns. Time does not change the obligation to refer, and it does not make what happened any less important to the person who experienced it. If someone shares something that happened in the past, they may have questions about what happens next and what will be shared. Where you can, be honest with them about the process. Your DSO can help you navigate this conversation and make sure the person disclosing knows what to expect.

- **What if it involves someone senior?**

This is often the hardest barrier of all. The [*Reporting Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations Code*](#) exists precisely for moments like this. Seniority does not change the process, and you will not be left to handle it on your own.

- **What if you are not sure it is serious enough?**

The code does not ask you to investigate or to be certain. It asks you to refer, and to let the right people take it forward. If you are unsure, speak to your DSO. They are there to help you work through it.

**The [*Reporting Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations Code*](#) is there to guide you.
Recognise. Respond. Record. Refer.**