



Responding to a Safeguarding Concern or Allegation

There are many situations whereby a member of the church may have concerns, or be made aware of concerns, regarding a child, young person and adult. For example:

- A child, young person or adult discloses abuse;
- Someone discloses concern for a child, young person or adult;
- Someone notices signs of potential abuse of a child, young person or adult;
- A child, young person or adult makes a disclosure about their own behaviour towards another child, young person or adult;
- Someone witnesses concerning behaviour during a church activity or during a home visit.

The concern or allegation might relate to someone at church or to someone elsewhere (e.g. at home, work or school). It might be a current situation, or something that happened in the past.

This procedure must be followed by all church officers¹ (PCC members, children's work leaders and helpers, pastoral team leaders and members etc) and it is strongly recommended for all other church members.

This procedure is distributed to all PCC members, all regular helpers of children's work, youth work, and work with vulnerable adults. The procedure will be reviewed yearly (in May/June following the APCMs) and circulated as above after any changes are made.

If anyone has a concern at any point, they should get in contact with our Parish Safeguarding Officer Lizzy Franks (safeguarding@ubsms.org.uk, 01920 822723) While we are in vacancy, please **don't** use the rector@ubsms.org.uk email address. The Diocesan Safeguarding Team can be contacted at safeguarding@stalbans.anglican.org.

Listen carefully

Whenever anyone reports that they are suffering or have suffered significant harm through abuse or neglect, or have caused or are causing harm to others, the initial response should be limited to listening carefully. If someone makes a disclosure this might be the only time they will tell someone about what is happening.

Please...

- Listen.
- Take what is said seriously.
- Remain calm.
- Take into account the person's age and level of understanding.
- Offer reassurance that disclosing is the right thing to do.
- Explain that information will need to be shared with the appropriate people.
- Only use open questions.² Use TED questioning: Tell me what happened; Explain that to me; Describe what happened.
- Establish only as much information as is needed to be able to report what is believed to have happened, when and where.

¹ A church officer is anyone appointed/elected by or on behalf of the Church to a post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid.

² Open questions begin with words like: who, what, when, where and how. They cannot be answered with a 'yes' or 'no'.

- At the end, check that you have understood everything correctly. Repeat back what the person has said – avoid rephrasing and try to use their language as much as possible.
- Check out what the person hopes to result from the disclosure.
- Tell the child or adult what you are going to do next (usually that you will pass on the information to the Parish Safeguarding Officer)

However...

- Do NOT assume that there is nothing to worry about – always pass on concerns, no matter how small they may seem to you. They could be part of a bigger picture.
- Do NOT make promises that cannot be kept (e.g. that you won't share the information).
- Do NOT make assumptions or offer alternative explanations.
- Do NOT investigate.
- Do NOT contact the person about whom allegations have been made.
- Do NOT carry out a physical or medical examination.
- Do NOT share with anyone other than those persons mentioned on the previous page.

Make a 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 Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser or the statutory authorities.
- Record the date, time, place and how the person appeared to you. If possible, try to record the 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 promptly...

Never do nothing. Always follow the procedure below.

