

PARISH OF THE SACRED HEART WIMBLEDON

Safeguarding of Children & Vulnerable Adults: Policy & Statement

Safeguarding Statement

The Parish Pastoral Council and clergy of the Church of the Sacred Heart believe in the dignity of children and vulnerable adults and we take seriously our responsibility to protect and promote their well-being. As a parish we rely on willing and conscientious volunteers to help ensure that the parish community remains a safe and secure environment in which children, young people and vulnerable adults are kept free from harm and risk.

We recognise that any failure to respond effectively to allegations of abuse may expose the child or vulnerable adult to further abuse. It also may undermine people's faith and the credibility of the Church, quite apart from the damage that it does to everyone's perception of this parish.

Society over the past twenty years has been trying to get all those involved in working with vulnerable people to work together. This policy and statement is a public declared willingness by Sacred Heart Parish to co-operate with statutory agencies in challenging abusive behaviour. We are committed to raising awareness of the importance of safeguarding issues amongst all who have care for children, young people and vulnerable adults in our parish community.

The Parish Priest has lead responsibility within the parish for all matters relating to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. In his role he is supported by members of the Parish Safeguarding Team (listed below).

This Parish Policy and Statement for Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults draws upon the Southwark Diocesan Pastoral Safeguarding Guidelines and the Southwark Safeguarding Parish Guidelines for Good Practice and should be understood in the light of these two complementary documents, copies of which can be viewed on the Diocesan website.

Safeguarding Policy

What is Child and Vulnerable Adult Abuse?

Abuse describes the ways in which a person's development and health are damaged by the actions of others. Abuse can take various forms:

- The failure to protect children and vulnerable adults through neglect or exposure to danger
- Actual physical injury or failure to prevent physical injury
- Persistent and severe emotional ill-treatment including severe rejection
- Sexual abuse or sexual exploitation
- Financial or material abuse or exploitation

How should you react if told about abuse?

Accept what the person, child or adult, says. Listen carefully and reassuringly. Try not to show shock or surprise. Do not push the person to say more than they want to say and do not ask probing questions (e.g. Who? Where? What?) if the person does not provide this information spontaneously. Never agree that the information can become "our little secret". Reassure the person that they have done the right thing in speaking out and that you will need to speak to someone who will help them.

Make careful notes as quickly as possible after the event including any comments that are made in response to the statements made. Date and sign your record. Make careful notes of when and whom you speak to when you make initial contact with the relevant authority, i.e., member of Parish Safeguarding Team or other agency. Be clear what steps they are intending to take. The child or vulnerable adult's wellbeing comes first.

The Alleged Perpetrator should never be approached. Never confront, inform or question the alleged abuser. The alleged abuser must be removed from any church-based activity where they could either continue to abuse or attempt to influence the person to withdraw his/her allegation.

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How far and how quickly will depend on the circumstances. Such “removal” does not imply innocence or guilt.

What should you do if you suspect that abuse may have occurred?

Urgent attention required - child

If you think a child is in immediate danger or the matter is urgent you should contact Merton Children, Schools and Family Department, the Police or the NSPCC.

Urgent attention required – vulnerable adult

If you think a vulnerable adult is in immediate danger or the matter is urgent you should contact the Merton Safeguarding Adult Line

Parish activity causing concern – child or vulnerable adult

If your concerns relate to parish activities and the danger is not immediate you should contact either the Parish Priest or a member of the Parish Safeguarding Team. In the event of any one of these not being available, or the concern relating to any one of them, you should contact the Southwark Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.

It is clearly open to any member of the parish to make direct contact with Merton’s Children, Schools and Families Department, Merton’s Adult Services Department or the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, particularly if they feel that the local personnel have not responded appropriately.

What is the role of the statutory agencies?

Merton’s Children, Schools and Families Department has a legally defined lead role in the investigation of allegations of Child Abuse. Merton Adult Services fulfills the same lead role in the investigation of allegations of abuse of vulnerable adults. Both these agencies always work closely with other relevant agencies such as police and health services.

What measures has Sacred Heart Parish put in place to promote Safeguarding?

As well as protecting children and vulnerable adults from harm, this policy also aims to protect all those in the parish working with children and vulnerable adults by raising awareness of good practice. For this reason all staff, clergy and volunteers with contact with children or vulnerable adults are required to complete application forms and provide references. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on these individuals are subsequently carried out by the Diocesan Safeguarding Office before the individual can be allowed to engage in the relevant parish activity. All such individuals will be supplied with a copy of this Parish Safeguarding Policy and Statement. The Parish Safeguarding Team also organises Safeguarding training as appropriate.

KEY CONTACTS

Parish Priest

Canon John Clark, Tel: 020 8946 0305

Parish Safeguarding Team

Chair - Jenny Cairns 020 8947 7320, 07906 856 183, Sue Chapman 020 8946 0981, 07718 906 150,
Jo Granger 020 8241 8805, 07870 145 751

Merton Children, Schools and Family Department

Tel: 020 8545 4226/7. Out of hours: 020 8770 5000

Merton Adult Social Care

Tel: 0845 618 9762 (Merton Safeguarding Adults Line)

Diocesan Safeguarding Office

Helen Sheppard, Southwark Diocesan Safeguarding Co-ordinator, Safeguarding Commission, St Gabriel’s House, Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7FQ Tel: 020 7261 1606