



Parish of St. Mary the Virgin, Warbleton

Policy and Guidance for Expressing Safeguarding Concerns

Introduction

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: given this, encouraging people to express concerns appropriately and in a timely fashion is an important aspect of a strong safeguarding culture. At the most simple level, anyone can spot a genuine concern and it is important that everyone who does so feels safe to raise that concern whether about an individual child or adult or a safeguarding practice.

The aim of this policy and associated guidance is to provide a clear and transparent way for anyone involved in the church to raise genuine concerns regarding poor practice that impacts upon the safety or wellbeing of children or adults to whom Warbleton Parish Church ministers. It also aims to ensure that any concerns are dealt with effectively and in a timely fashion, whether that concern is about individuals or safeguarding practice.

This policy and guidance provides a simple set of steps to deal with concerns and applies to everyone involved in the church whether paid or voluntary, church attendees whether appointed to particular roles or not.

Our commitment as members of the PCC :

- To recognise that no other concern or responsibility, however genuine, outweighs the need to prioritise the welfare of children and adults at all times
- To welcome, encourage and urge anyone who is concerned about the safety and welfare of a child or adult to report those concerns in accordance with the Guidance which follows and in accordance with the Guidance found in the section of the Diocesan Safeguarding Website, entitled 'What Do I Do If?'
- To welcome, encourage and urge anyone who is concerned about any aspect of our safeguarding practice or provision to raise those concerns, as outlined in the Guidance below.
- To guarantee that no-one who raises any concern in good faith, even if those concerns are ultimately found to be unfounded, will face any adverse consequences whatsoever.

Guidelines for Expressing Concern about Safeguarding Practice

What to do if you have a concern:

- In the first instance, speak to the leader of the area of church about which you have a concern (for instance, if your concern is about Sunday Club, speak to the Sunday Club Leader). A good principle is that concerns should be dealt as close to source as possible, and only escalated beyond that if those concerns remain. However, if your concern is about the behaviour of a leader in the church (lay or ordained), you may feel that you need to escalate it to someone in authority over them; you would be perfectly justified in doing this.
- Try to be as specific as possible: what or whom are you concerned about exactly? Can you give specific dates or examples of what has caused your concern? Vague concerns are difficult to investigate. If you only have an impression, or cannot give specific examples, you may still wish to express concerns but be open about the limited details you have.

Try to avoid language that is either accusatory or emotive: your aim is to improve an area of church life, not to put the recipient of your concern on the defensive.

- It is very helpful to quote policy, if you can (although if you cannot, this is not a reason to avoid expressing your concern). This helps the person receiving your concern to see very quickly that you are simply holding the church to account to its own policies, or to Diocesan policies.
- Face-to-face is usually best, but follow up the conversation in writing. “Last Sunday after church I expressed a concern about X, you replied by saying Y, and you said you would get back to me by Z. Please could you reply by confirming my understanding of our conversation is correct”: a simple written communication such as this can assist greatly in providing clarification to all concerned about what was said (although see below guidance for the person receiving the concern along similar lines).
- If you are satisfied that your concern has been resolved, you can leave the matter there. If you are not, it is important that you escalate it. We suggest that a suitable ‘order of escalation’ would be:
 1. **Lay Leader in Church (e.g. Children’s Work Leader)**
 2. **Parish Safeguarding Officer (or member of the Safeguarding Team)**
 3. **Incumbent (and/or churchwarden in a vacancy)**
 4. **Diocesan Safeguarding Team (if the issue is Diocese wide)**
- In escalating your concern, you are acting in an entirely appropriate way. Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility; there may be the rare occasion where you just have to raise your concern outside of your local parish context, in order to ensure that the children and adults your church ministers to are safe.

Guidelines for Expressing Concern about an individual child, young person or vulnerable adult

What to do if you have a concern:

- In the first instance, speak to the leader of the area of church activity in which the child, young person or vulnerable adult is involved (for instance, if your concern is with someone attending Sunday Club speak to the Sunday Club Leader). A good principle is that concerns should be dealt with as close to source as possible, and only escalated beyond that if those concerns remain.
- Try to be as specific as possible: what or whom are you concerned about exactly? Can you give specific dates or examples of what has caused your concern? Vague concerns are difficult to investigate. If you only have an impression, or cannot give specific examples, you may still wish to express concerns but be open about the limited details you have.
- If you are concerned about a child be prepared to complete a standard “Reporting Concerns About a Child Form” available from the leader. This form could be used for a young person (16 or 17 year old.)
- Try to avoid language that is either accusatory or emotive:
- Face-to-face is usually best, but follow up the conversation in writing. “Last Sunday after church I expressed a concern about X, you replied by saying Y, and you said you would get back to me by Z. Please could you reply by confirming my understanding of our conversation is correct”: a simple written communication such as this can assist greatly in providing clarification to all concerned about what was said (although see below guidance for the person receiving the concern along similar lines).
- If you are satisfied that your concern has been resolved, you can leave the matter there. If you are not, it is important that you escalate it. We suggest that a suitable ‘order of escalation’ would be:
 1. **Lay Leader in Church (eg. Sunday Club leader)**
 2. **Parish Safeguarding Officer (or member of the Safeguarding Team)**
 3. **Incumbent (and/or churchwarden in a vacancy)**
 4. **Diocesan Safeguarding Team**
- In escalating your concern, you are acting in an entirely appropriate way. Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility; there may be the rare occasion where you just have to raise your concern outside of your local parish context, in order to ensure that the children and adults your church ministers to are safe.
- If you feel that the concern has great urgency and cannot be escalated in this manner (for instance if you are concerned about the safety or welfare of a child or adult), then you must raise those concerns without delay with the appropriate statutory authority. Please follow the guidance on the Diocesan Safeguarding Website, under the section entitled ‘What Do I Do If?’. Use the appropriate sub-heading to find out how best to report these concerns.