

Ascension Church, Haywards Heath

Freely you have received, freely give. Matt 10:8

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Keeping Children Safe

The House of Bishops Policy document on Child Protection requires all clergy and lay people to maintain the highest professional standards in their work and relationships with children and young people. The welfare of the child is paramount. All children, without exception, have the right to protection from abuse. Children need to be safe from harm and adults need to be protected from false allegations or temptation. The Ascension Anti-Bullying Policy should be read in conjunction with this policy.

A Safe Environment

Make sure that any activity that involves children or young people is carefully organised and risk assessed, that the premises are safe in all aspects and that there is sufficient help for the numbers of children.

During evening activities the Church outside lights must be switched on.

We require 2 people to be present for all activities and the following ratios in addition;

0-2 years 1 person for every 3 children

2-3 years 1 person for every 4 children

3-8 years 1 person for every 8 children

over 8 years 1 person for the first 8 children, 1 extra for every extra 12 children

A child is a person under 18 years of age.

A young person is a person aged 16 or 17 years. For the ratios above a young person will not count as one of the 2 minimum required people.

A registration form must be filled in for all children and young people attending church activities where their responsible adult is not on the premises and a register of attendance kept for all such activities. Consent forms for anyone under the age of 18 are required for off-site activities. Leaders will take a copy of the forms onto the activity and the originals filed in the church filing cabinet. Risk Assessments for all external activities must be completed with a copy filed as above.

Diocesan recruitment procedures must be followed for all paid workers and volunteers. New volunteers can only be allowed to help after they have been regular attenders for 6 months. Group Leaders must inform the Parish Safeguarding Officer of any new volunteers and they will not be able to take up their post until the recruitment procedure has been completed. References will be required. No one with a conviction or caution for sexual offences against children is allowed to be part of a mixed-age activity. Those living with disqualified persons must speak to the Parish Safeguarding Officer prior to taking on a voluntary position.

The Chichester Diocesan Synod has adopted the national Church of England safeguarding policy and various practice guidance documents. These documents represent a significant degree of ongoing progress towards making the church a safe place for all.

All Church of England safeguarding policy documents can be found via the following link:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual>

The use of imaging devices is restricted and an announcement must be made before any photo is taken saying what it will be used for to give people a chance to remove themselves. Parental consent must always

be sought. If permission for publication is given, the children must not be named and the Data Protection act must be adhered to for any storage of such photos. Parents/carers should be advised that when taking photographs of their own children they can only be for personal use and not posted on social media sites as they may contain images of other children for which parental consent would be required.

It is ill advised to accept young people as 'friends' on social networking sites and no mobile phone contact with children and young people is advised. Everyone should behave appropriately on the internet including their postings on social media.

Leaders will be responsible for accompanying children to and from the Breakout room(s).

Workers and volunteers are advised not to offer lifts to children and young people unless this is an arrangement between parents who are friends. When arranged transport is required only reputable companies will be used. If an unexpected lift is given it must be reported to the Parish Safeguarding Officer so it can be recorded.

Fire safety awareness for both the Church and the Ashenground Centre is to be carried out annually or when there is a high proportion of visitors for special services.

If First Aid is required the incident must be recorded in the book within each Kit Box. There is a fully stocked box in both the right hand Vestry and the Ashenground Kitchen. A list of trained First Aiders is posted in the right hand Vestry.

Code of behaviour

All helpers should:

- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity in a manner which is fair and without prejudice at all times.
- Use correct language, tone of voice and body language.
- Learn to control and discipline children without physical punishment, this must never be used.
- Use appropriate physical contact befitting the age of the children.
- Report any construed inappropriate contact to the Parish Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible. Ensure that another adult is informed if a helper needs to take a child to the toilet. Toilet breaks should be organised for young children.
- If known in advance, a parent's permission must be sought if a child or young person is to be seen on his or her own. Another adult must be nearby and the child or young person must know this.
- Ensure that each mixed group has equal gender balance in helpers.
- Ensure that children and young people know that they can speak to an independent person in the parish, or contact 'ChildLine', if they need to talk to someone out of the area. The 'ChildLine' number is prominently displayed in Church; 0800 1111

Helpers should not:

- Invade a child's privacy whilst washing or toileting.
- Play rough physical or sexually provocative games.
- Be sexually suggestive about a child or to a young person, even in fun.
- Touch inappropriately or obtrusively.
- Show favouritism to any one child or young person or group.
- Allow a child or young person to involve the worker in excessive attention seeking that is overtly physical or sexual in nature.
- Give lifts to children or young people on their own. If this is unavoidable ask the child or young person to sit in the back of the vehicle.

- Share sleeping accommodation with young people.
- Invite a young person to the worker's home alone.
- Permit abusive peer activities, e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing, bullying.
- Allow unknown adult's access to children. Visitors should always be accompanied by a known person.

Children can be harmed by:

- Physical abuse; neglect; emotional abuse; sexual abuse.
- Harm can come from within their own families, trusted adults, those involved with them on organised activities or sometimes, although rarely, by a stranger.

All church workers with children must know what to do if they are concerned that a child or young person is being harmed or if they disclose abuse. Any perceived cries for help should be handled sensitively.

Responding to Safeguarding Allegations

The Ascension Church recognises that in all matters that involve allegations that someone has, or may have, caused harm to another person, whether child or adult, the welfare of the alleged victim is paramount and is our primary concern. No other consideration, however legitimate or important, can outweigh this primary responsibility.

The Ascension Church recognises that all involved in situations where allegations are made require pastoral support. In particular, the person making the allegation and their family, and the person against whom the allegation is made and their family, will require skilled and careful pastoral support. Providing that support may be complex, and we recognise and commit to working with the wider Diocese should this situation arise.

The Ascension Church has a separate '*Responding to Safeguarding Allegations within the Parish policy and guidance*' and will respond to any safeguarding allegations inline with the policy and guidance.

Hearing a child abuse disclosure

Workers and volunteers may get to know the children and young people in their groups very well. A child or young person may feel enough trust to be able to talk about unhappy things that are happening – at home, at school or at church. This is both a privilege and a responsibility. Remember that the child may want the abuse to stop but still love the abuser. The child may think that it is possible to stop the abuse without anything else happening. If the child asks to talk in confidence ALWAYS tell them that that will depend on the circumstances. It will be necessary to get other people to help if they are being harmed. If possible, try to have another adult present whilst the child speaks, but do not prevent the child from speaking.

- Do not express shock / distress but maintain eye contact.
- Allow the child to talk, but don't press for information.
- Tell the child that they are not to blame for anything that has happened.
- Reassure the child that they were right to tell.
- Let the child know that you will have to tell other people so that the abuse can stop.
- Explain simply what your next actions will be.
- Reassure the child that you will support them during the difficult time to come.

- Confidentiality is paramount at all times.

As soon as possible write down as carefully as possible what the child has said, how they said it and how they appeared emotionally. Write down what you said, sign and date it. Do not talk to the alleged abuser. Give the information immediately to the Parish Safeguarding Officer or to the Parish Vicar should the Safeguarding Officer not be available.

If child abuse is suspected or a child discloses abuse, Social Services must be informed. Allegations against paid workers or volunteers may fall into three types of investigation: Criminal, Child Protection, Disciplinary or Misconduct. (Legal and Diocesan policies MUST be followed).

Complete confidentiality in all matters must be observed.

Diocesan Advisor for Safeguarding.

Mr Colin Perkins
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Kim Nash – Safeguarding Administrator

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The Incumbent

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Social Services

During normal office hours Tel: 01403 229900 Emergency out of hours Tel: 03302226664

Local Police Child Protection Team

Tel: 101 for non emergency and 999 if in immediate danger

NSPCC helpline

Tel: 0808 800 5000

ChildLine

Tel: 0800 1111

Be prepared for your colleagues to remind you if you forget any of the requirements for good practice and be prepared to help a colleague by advising them in return.

Reviewed and reapproved 16th June 2026