



# St Mark's Church

## LEAMINGTON SPA

**St Mark's Church, Leamington Spa**

### **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE and VULNERABLE ADULTS IN OUR CHURCH**

#### **PARISH SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND POLICY FOR RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC ABUSE**

##### **INDEX**

Purpose of this guidance	Page
Safeguarding Policy of the Church of England	3
Definitions	3
What is Abuse	4
As a Church, We Will...	5
Appendix 1 - Policy for Responding to Domestic Abuse	7
Appendix 2 - Code of Behaviour for Adults Working with Children and Young People	8
Appendix 3 - Code of Behaviour for Working with Vulnerable Adults	10
Appendix 4 - Guidance for Responding to a Child, Young Person or Vulnerable Adult who makes an allegation of abuse	12
Appendix 5 – Electronic Communication and Use of Social Media	14
Appendix 6 - Form to Record Allegations of Abuse or Concern	16
Appendix 7 - Useful Contact Details	18



**St Mark's Church**  
LEAMINGTON SPA

 THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Rugby Road, Leamington Spa, CV32 6DL  
01926 421 004  
[www.st-marks.net](http://www.st-marks.net)

Reg. charity no. 1128485

Reviewed – 14 July 2025

Review cycle – 1 year

## **PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY**

To safeguard, care for and nurture children, young people and vulnerable adults in our church and in our community.

To inform those involved with children, young people and vulnerable adults in our church of the behaviour expected of them.

To support adult members of the church subject to malicious or false accusations of abuse.

## **SAFEGUARDING POLICY STATEMENT OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND**

The Church of England, its archbishops, bishops, clergy and leaders are committed to safeguarding as an integral part of the life and ministry of the Church.

Safeguarding means the action the Church takes to promote a safer culture. This means we will promote the welfare of children, young people and adults, work to prevent abuse from occurring, seek to protect those that are at risk of being abused and respond well to those that have been abused. We will take care to identify where a person may present a risk to others and offer support to them whilst taking steps to mitigate such risks. The Church of England affirms the 'Whole Church' approach to safeguarding. This approach encompasses a commitment to consistent policy and practice across all Church bodies, Church Officers and that everyone associated with the Church, who comes into contact with children, young people and adults, has a role to play. The Church will take appropriate steps to maintain a safer environment for all and to practice fully and positively Christ's Ministry towards children, young people and adults; to respond sensitively and compassionately to their needs in order to help keep them safe from harm.

The Church of England safeguarding policy statement is based on five foundations and offers six overarching policy commitments:

- Promoting a safer environment and culture
- Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the Church
- Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation
- Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons
- Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons
- Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others.

This policy applies to all Church Bodies and Church Officers. Full understanding of, and adherence to, this policy should lead to a deepening in the understanding of, and respect for, the rights of children, young people and vulnerable adults as people of faith in the life of the Church.

(Church of England's Policy on Promoting a Safer Church 2017. Adopted by Coventry Diocese in 2018, Adopted annually by St Marks Church)

## DEFINITIONS

Child	Any person aged under 18 years old
Young Person	Any person aged 14 to 17 years old
Vulnerable Adult	Any person aged 18 or over whose ability to protect themselves from violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation is significantly impaired through physical or mental disability or illness, old age, emotional fragility or distress, or otherwise; and for that purpose, the reference to being impaired is to being temporarily or indefinitely impaired.  (Section 6 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016)
Church Officer	Any person appointed/elected by or on behalf of the Church to a post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid. This would include Churchwardens who are elected and appointed, but not, for example, to children work volunteers.

## WHAT IS ABUSE?

The Church of England's Safeguarding E-Manual sets out different types of abuse and what signs there may be to indicate abuse. These types of abuse are listed below. Further detail can be found in the manual:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual/safeguarding-children-young-people-and-vulnerable-adults/2>

- Physical Abuse
- Domestic Abuse
- Neglect, Acts of Omission and Self-Neglect
- Organisational Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Exploitation
- Financial Abuse
- Modern Slavery
- Extremism and Radicalisation

- Discrimination, Bullying (including Cyber Bullying and On-Line Abuse)
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Emotional and Psychological Abuse (including Spiritual Abuse)

### ***Who Abuses Children or Young People?***

There is no 'typical' situation or environment in which child abuse may occur although many children are abused by parents. Children may also be abused in an institution or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely by a stranger. Child abuse takes place in all areas of society, within all cultures and within all socio-economic groups. The majority of abusers of children are men; however, women do abuse children and may collude with the abuser often through fear.

### ***Who Abuses Vulnerable Adults?***

Abuse and neglect might be carried out by anyone in contact with adults, even by people employed to provide care.

## **AS A CHURCH WE WILL...**

- create a safe environment for children, young people and adults by implementing the Church of England's House of Bishops policy Promoting a Safer Church 2017;
- ensure that all those working with children, young people or vulnerable adults on a paid or voluntary basis are carefully selected, using the Disclosure and Barring Service, if appropriate, as part of the safe recruitment process as outlined in the Church of England's Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance 2021;
- ensure that all those working with children, young people or vulnerable adults, on a paid or voluntary basis, have a clear understanding of what is expected of them in their role, an identified line manager and a regular review of their role;
- encourage everyone within the church community, whether volunteer, paid staff member or visitor to understand and uphold the need to prioritise and champion safeguarding as part of the church's responsibility to respect everyone and create a safe, inclusive and nurturing environment;
- ensure that all who work with children, young people or vulnerable adults or who are in a leadership role complete required safeguarding training and DBS checks;
- respond without delay to every complaint made that a child, young person or vulnerable adult, for whom we are responsible, may have been harmed or is in significant danger;
- respond without delay to any allegations or concerns that are raised about the behaviour of any adult within our church
- supervise and support any member of our church community known to have offended against a child, young person in line with the Diocesan guidance;
- review this policy annually;
- display a copy of this policy on relevant noticeboards and on our website, along with contact details for the Parish Safeguarding Officer and Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

The PCC has identified activities involving children, young people and vulnerable adults to which the Diocesan Policy statement 2018 refers.

Guidelines apply to employees and volunteers who work with:

- Local schools
- Toddler Club (including Summer Fun)
- Sunday children's groups
- Pathfinders & Youth group
- Worship groups involving young people
- Vulnerable adults in the Pastoral Care team
- After Service Prayer Ministry (see specific guidance on this in separate guidance document)
- The housebound, and those in care homes, in administering Holy Communion

## **Appendix 1 - Policy for Responding to Domestic Abuse**

**All forms of domestic abuse are wrong and must stop. We are committed to promoting and supporting environments which:**

- Ensure that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse;
- Protect those vulnerable to domestic abuse from actual or potential harm;
- Recognise equality amongst people and within relationships;
- Enable and encourage concerns to be raised and responded to appropriately and consistently.

**We recognise that:**

- All forms of domestic abuse cause damage to the survivor and express an imbalance of power in the relationship;
- All survivors (regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity) have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse;
- Domestic abuse can occur in all communities;
- Domestic abuse may be a single incident, but is usually a systematic, repeated pattern which escalates in severity and frequency;
- Domestic abuse, if witnessed or overheard by a child, is a form of abuse by the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour;
- Working in partnership with children, adults and other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of any child or adult suffering abuse.

**We will endeavour to respond to domestic abuse by:**

**In all our activities –**

- Valuing, listening to and respecting both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

**In our publicity –**

- Raising awareness about other agencies, support services, resources and expertise, through providing information in public and women-only areas of relevance to survivors, children and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

**When concerns are raised –**

- Ensuring that those who have experienced abuse can find safety and informed help;
- Working with the appropriate statutory bodies during an investigation into domestic abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the church community.

**In our care –**

- Ensuring that informed and appropriate pastoral care is offered to any child, young person or adult who has suffered abuse;
- Identifying and outlining the appropriate relationship of those with pastoral care responsibilities with both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

## Appendix 2 - Code of Behaviour for Adults Working with Children and Young People.

### Always

- Remember that you are seen as being in a position of trust and as a role model for children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church and should be mindful, therefore, of your behaviour at all times;
- Treat all children, young people and vulnerable adults with respect and dignity and ensure that your own language, tone of voice and body language is respectful;
- Aim to work within sight of another adult and **never** lead one of the groups on your own. If it becomes impossible to find a DBS certificated colleague to help you, the group should be cancelled or should join another group where there is an adequate number of DBS certificated holders present;
- Ensure that another DBS helper accompanies you if a child needs to be taken to the toilet;
- Organize toilet breaks for young children;
- Ensure that children, young people and vulnerable adults know who they can talk to if they need to speak to someone about a personal concern, but, in your roles at St Marks, you should never make an arrangement to visit a child at home. The Children and Families Co-ordinator is the **only** person permitted to make such visits, on behalf of St Marks. Any arrangements made, between friends and family, to visit a child or young person at home, should be with parental/guardian consent;
- Babysitting services should not be offered to individual families in your capacity as a children and young people's volunteer. Where babysitting arrangements are offered to friends and family, outside of your capacity as a children and young people's volunteer, these must be with parental/guardian consent;
- Respond warmly to a child who needs comforting, but make sure there are other adults around;
- Ensure that the child and parents are aware of any planned activity that involves physical contact beforehand;
- Administer any necessary First Aid with others around;
- Adhere to the guidance contained in the St Mark's policy on Photography and Sharing of Images;
- Obtain parental permission to have email addresses and mobile phone numbers for members of your group, and where possible only communicate via the parents;
- Record any concerning incidents using the pro-forma, in Appendix 6, from the Diocesan guidelines, date and sign the record and give it to your group leader, Parish Safeguarding Officer or Vicar;
- Challenge a fellow worker if you feel that their behaviour towards children or young people is inappropriate;
- Share concerns about a child or the behaviour of another worker with the Children and Families Co-ordinator and the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

### Never

- Initiate physical contact. Any necessary contact (e.g. for comfort, see above) should be initiated by the child;
- Invade a child's privacy while washing or toileting;
- Play rough physical or sexually provocative games;



- Use any form of physical punishment;
- Be sexually suggestive about or to a child even in fun;
- Touch a child inappropriately or obtrusively;
- Scapegoat, ridicule or reject a child, group or adult;
- Permit abusive peer activities e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying;
- Show favouritism to any one child or group;
- Allow a child or young person to involve you in excessive attention seeking that is overtly physical or sexual in nature;
- Send emails or text messages to individual members of your group;
- Give lifts, in your capacity as a children and young people's volunteer, to children or young people on their own or on your own. All lifts offered informally to children and young people should be with parental/guardian consent. Currently St Marks does not, formally as a Church, organise lifts for children and young people;
- Drink alcohol when responsible for young people;
- Share sleeping accommodation with children;
- Invite a child to your home alone;
- Arrange, in your role as a children and young people's volunteer, social occasions with children and young people (other than family members) which are outside of organized group occasions. Any social occasions with children and young people, arranged between friends and family, should be with parental/guardian consent
- Allow unknown adults access to children. Visitors should always be accompanied by a known person;
- Allow strangers to give children lifts.

### **Recommended staffing levels.**

- The recommended minimum staffing levels for children's groups are given below. More help may be required if children have special needs, are being taken out, are undertaking physical activities or if circumstances require it.
  - 0–2 years - 1 adult for every 3 children
  - 2–3 years - 1 adult for every 4 children
  - 3–8 years - 1 adult for every 8 children
- Over 8 years - 1 adult for the first 8 children then one adult for every 12 additional children. Each group should have at least 2 adults and it is recommended that there should be at least 1 male and 1 female.
- If small groups are in the same room or adjoining rooms with open access between them then it is possible to have only 1 adult per group, dependent on the nature of the activity.
- Young people under 18 years who are being encouraged to develop their leadership skills through helping should always be overseen by an appointed worker who will be responsible for ensuring that good practice and safeguarding procedures are followed and the work they are doing is appropriate to both their age and understanding.

## **Appendix 3 – Code of Behaviour for Working with Vulnerable Adults**

### **Basic Principles**

Adults who are vulnerable are a valued and valuable part of church life and should be able to engage in active membership of church communities. Churches should focus not just on the needs these adults have, but also - and indeed primarily - on the abilities and gifts they bring and how they can contribute to the life and fellowship of the church. With this in mind, churches should:

- Create an environment where all people, including those who are vulnerable, are encouraged to participate in and contribute to all aspects of church life;
- Consider how church activities, including public worship, promote and enable the inclusion of vulnerable adults;
- Adopt and publish policies and procedures for the safeguarding of vulnerable adults;
- Work with all adults, especially those who have specific vulnerabilities or who are at particular risk, in ways that empower them to be in control of their own lives and make their own decisions. The underlying principle of the Care Act 2014, for instance, has been summarised neatly in the phrase: “No decision about me, without me”.

### **Home Visiting:**

Visiting adults at home can be a valuable aspect of pastoral care. This will often be done on an informal, neighbourly basis. Such arrangements fall outside of the scope of this guidance, which only applies to ‘formal’ visiting done in the name of the church. Visiting at home is especially important for adults who are home-bound, for instance through disability or illness, and can contribute greatly to the quality of their lives. Care must be taken, however, both for the protection of those being visited and for the those doing the visiting. There should be accountability and transparency in the manner in which church officers engage in lone working or visits to homes. Good Practice when visiting people at home:

- Ideally let people you are visiting know in advance that you are going to visit, particularly if it is your first visit.
- If this is a first visit, or if the conversation is likely to move onto sensitive pastoral matters, ensure that the person is aware that the conversation is confidential, but also what the boundaries of confidentiality are.
- If possible, visit in pairs - again, especially if it is the first visit. However, it is recognised that much pastoral visiting, particularly by clergy, is done alone and this guidance does not place a restriction on that, as long as the other aspects of safer working practice in this guidance are followed.
- Carry some identification on the first visit and be proactive in letting the person see it. This is particularly important for elderly people living alone, who may have other people (‘bogus callers’) visiting to exploit them in some way.

Letting them know that they have a right to see identification does them a great service.

- Consider the risks of the visit. Is the person, or another occupant, volatile or unpredictable? Do they have a dog who does not like visitors? You may not know everything before a first visit but try and find out what you can.
- Carry a mobile phone and let someone know where you are and when you expect to return.
- Ask the person whether they would like repeat visits, whether and how they would like to be contacted again, and so on. Leave them feeling fully in control of your contact with them. Make a note of the visit; store all such notes confidentially. The note does not need to be extensive, but the date, time of arrival and departure, and any significant observations or points of conversation should be recorded. Let the person you are visiting know that you keep brief records, and always be prepared to show them your notes should they ask.
- If you are asked to make any purchases on behalf of the person, always retain receipts and return both them and any change to the person immediately. Keep a record of any transactions and the reason for them.
- Set appropriate boundaries and be wary of over-promising. If you do not have the ability to meet the needs of the person you are visiting, say that you will try and find suitable help, but avoid getting drawn into a dependant relationship that ultimately disempowers the person you are visiting.
- Take care regarding accepting any gifts other than token items, to avoid misunderstandings or subsequent accusations from the person or their family. If courtesy demands that you accept a small gift, declare it to the Church Office. If someone wants to make a donation to the church, put it in an envelope, mark it on the outside as a donation and obtain a receipt from the Treasurer.

### **Giving Lifts:**

Giving lifts, informally, to vulnerable adults is also a valuable aspect of pastoral care. Currently St Marks does not, formally as a Church, organise lifts for adults. If you are alone in the car with the vulnerable adult, you should inform the Parish Safeguarding Officer or the Vicar about the arrangement.

This guidance is based on the Church of England's Safer Environment and Activities guidance document 2019. Further guidance on supporting people with specific needs, financial matters, sight loss, hearing loss, restricted mobility and learning difficulties can be found here:

[https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/safer-environment-and-activities-oct19\\_0.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/safer-environment-and-activities-oct19_0.pdf)

## **Appendix 4 - Guidance for Responding to a Child, Young Person or Vulnerable Adult, who makes an allegation of abuse.**

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 officers<sup>1</sup> and it is strongly recommended for all other church members.

### **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, including the Vicar and the parish safeguarding officer.
- Only use open questions.<sup>2</sup>
- Establish only as much information as is needed to be able to report what is believed to have happened, when and where.
- At the end, check that you have understood everything correctly.
- Check out what the person hopes to result from the disclosure.
- Tell the child or adult what you are going to do next.

---

<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

### However...

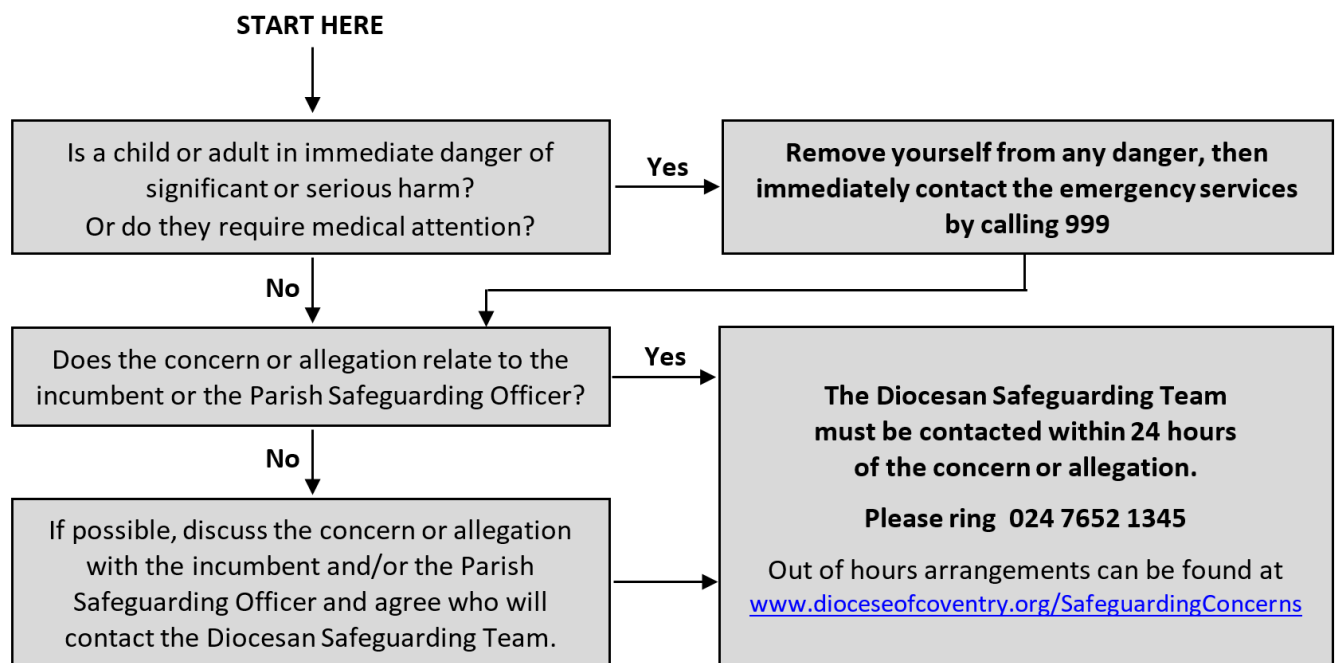
- Do NOT make promises that cannot be kept (e.g. that you won't share the information).
- Do NOT make assumptions or offer alternative explanations.
- Do NOT investigate.
- Do NOT contact the person about whom allegations have been made.
- Do NOT carry out a physical or medical examination.
- Do NOT share with anyone other than those persons mentioned above.

### 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.



Based on the Coventry Diocese Model Policy

## **Appendix 5 - Electronic communication and Use of Social Media**

### **Mobile phones, messaging and emails.**

If you intend to communicate with children or young people on-line, for example messaging via their mobile phone or email, make sure that their parents or carers are aware of this and that they consent to you having a child or young person's mobile phone number and email address.

On-line messages and emails are private by nature, so take care when you use this medium. Do not communicate with children or young people individually, always send group messages or emails and send a copy to another leader. Save messages to ensure an open record exists.

Make sure that your communication is such that it would not embarrass you for it to be seen by the child or young person's parents, by a vulnerable adult or their carer, by church officials or in court.

You should also be aware that a child, young person or vulnerable adult may choose to disclose abuse to you through the use of electronic communication, in which case you should save a copy of the 'conversation' and refer to the guidance on what to do if a disclosure is made. Make sure you know how to do this before a situation arises.

### **Social Media**

Young people and children use social media sites as part of everyday communication. Care should be taken when using social media as a way of communicating with young people and children – where possible set up a group site and only send group messages. DO NOT communicate with individual young people and children by sending private messages. This is like being in a room with them on your own with the door closed.

### **Chat rooms**

Due to the potential for misuse by those who are a risk to children, young people or vulnerable adults and the difficulties of managing the use of chat rooms and instant messaging, St Marks will not communicate in this way with children, young people or vulnerable adults.

### **What to do if you have concerns.**

Concerns could come to light if you become aware that:

- a leader or helper is e-mailing individual children or young people;
- a leader or helper is messaging individual children or young people;
- a leader or helper is communicating with individual children, young people or vulnerable adults via chat rooms;
- a leader or helper is showing children, young people or vulnerable adults sexual pictures from the internet;
- a leader or helper is taking photographs of individual children, young people or vulnerable adults, outside of photographs approved by St Marks;

Such concerns **must** be acted on. While this may cause anxieties, a decision not to pursue these concerns could lead to failures in safeguarding a child, young person or vulnerable adult and adequately supervising the person acting outside of these behaviours.

You must immediately refer your concerns to the vicar, Parish Safeguarding Officer or the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser who will advise you on what action is needed and offer support.

Please note that making, downloading or distributing indecent images of children and young people is a criminal offence. If you become aware that this is happening, you must report it to the police and inform the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser at the earliest opportunity.

## Appendix 6: Form to Record Allegations of Abuse or Concern

### Pro forma for Recording Allegations of Abuse or Concerns about the Well-being or Behaviour of a Child, Young Person or Adult.

Name of Church	
Name and contact number of Vicar	
Name and contact number of person completing report	
Date of report	
Date and place of observations or incident	
Name of group (if appropriate)	
Name and address of child/young person/adult	
Date of birth of child/young person/adult	
Name and contact number of parent or carer	
Report (continue on separate sheet if needed)	



Advice given/actions taken/people spoken to

Signed:

Dated

Please print name:

This report must be handed to your Parish Safeguarding Officer and should be kept in a secure location in the Parish Office. A copy must be sent to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser within 24 hours.

Coventry Diocese Form 2016

## Appendix 7 - Useful Contact Details

Parish Safeguarding Officer	Sue Turner safeguarding@st-marks.net
Vicar	Tim Broadbent vicar@st-marks.net
Coventry Diocese Safeguarding Team:	024 76521345 Email: Safeguarding@Coventry.Anglican.org Outside of office hours, calls will be diverted to a 24-hour safeguarding helpline operated by an independent Christian charity called <a href="#">thirty-one:eight</a> .
Warwickshire Social Care & Health	Children: 01926 414144 and choose option 3. Adults: 01926 412080 Out of hours (Child and Adults): 01926 886922
Warwickshire Police	01926 415 000 / 101 if dialling from Warwickshire. In an emergency 999
NSPCC	0800 800 5000
CRASAC (Coventry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre), P. O. Box 2464, Coventry CV1 1ZA	Helpline 02476 277777 24-hour answer phone. www.crasac.org.uk helpline@crasac.org.uk
Rape or Sexual Abuse Support (RoSA) – Warwickshire	Telephone: 01788 551 151 E-mail: <a href="mailto:support@rosasupport.org">support@rosasupport.org</a> Website: <a href="http://www.rosasupport.org">www.rosasupport.org</a>

### Other national helplines

The following national helplines are also available:

- Childline – 0800 1111
- Stop it Now – 0808 1000 900
- NAPAC (National Association for People Abused in Childhood) – 0808 801 0331
- Samaritans – 116 123
- Family Lives – 0808 800 2222
- National Domestic Violence Helpline – 0808 2000 247

- Action on Elder Abuse – 0808 808 8141