

Dear Member of Clergy /Retired Member of Clergy with Permission to Officiate / Licensed Reader/ Churchwarden/ PCC Member / Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Where shall I begin? What a year it has been.

Well what a year it has been for all of us. A very difficult time with so many people losing loved ones, many people feeling loneliness and isolation through enforced lock down. I hope you and your families are well. Church members have played a vital role in helping support our wider communities. Throughout lockdown many of our members have been out there assisting in any way they can, keeping in contact with a vast array of people including the elderly and vulnerable, doing shopping and offering support. Thank you for all you have done it is both welcomed and appreciated.

Important information – relevant to you and your church role – please read.

It is that time of year when I take the opportunity to write to you about the latest developments and requirements in safeguarding. This is a very important topic, affecting every one of us. I hope you will spare the time to read my letter and its accompanying information sheet. The diocesan office tries very hard to limit the amount and frequency of this type direct communication, so I will be as brief as possible.

Please could you share this communication and the information sheet widely in your congregation. In the past I have written to a more limited audience with the assumption that this vital information would be shared, sadly that has not always been the case.

Safeguarding – whose responsibility is it anyway?

Despite our historic failures, many people still see the church as a place to go to feel safe, welcomed and listened to. They choose to join us seeking sanctuary, a warm welcome and listening ear. They may be stepping inside to appreciate our beautiful buildings. They may have had all sorts of experiences that trouble them and are seeking help. This may be related to safeguarding it may not. We need to know how to respond in the right way when needed.

We all have responsibility in relation to safeguarding in the church. This may differ depending on what your role is. Church of England policy gives specific responsibilities to the clergy and PCCs. It also has expectations of those who help out in leading services such as Retired Clergy and Licensed Lay Readers. Every individual in a leadership role, or in any church activity needs to know how to respond to a safeguarding incident or concern. It is vitally important that we understand our responsibilities.

Contrary to popular belief, safeguarding requirements and responsibilities are not onerous in relation to churches and their activities. It is very easy for a PCC to put in place what is required. Please do refer to the attached information sheet or the safeguarding pages of the diocesan website.

However small a church is, however small a congregation is, even if there are no children in church, there are still safeguarding responsibilities.

What to do if you have a concern?

If anyone has any concerns about anything that may be a safeguarding matter, they are encouraged to report the matter to their member of Clergy. If the parish is in vacancy they should then report the matter to their Rural Dean. People with concerns are also encouraged to seek advice from the parish / benefice safeguarding officer where there is one. Every safeguarding concern should then be referred through to me or a member of my team.

Training.

Anyone who carries out a church officer role, is expected to undertake safeguarding training to a defined level dependent on the nature of that role. The vast majority of people at a parish level are only required to undertake, basic (C0) and foundation (C1) levels of safeguarding training. (This is free online training available directly from the main Church of England website). Only a few individuals: Clergy, Retired Clergy with PTO, Licensed Lay Readers, Parish Safeguarding Officers are required to undertake the additional higher level of leadership (C2) training. (This is delivered virtually via workbook and zoom). Individuals who are required to undergo the higher level of training will be contacted by the safeguarding team when their training is due for renewal.

Parish Safeguarding – PCC Responsibility.

The attached information sheet goes into detail about what should be in place in a parish. Every PCC should adopt a "Promoting a Safe Church" policy and display a notice to this effect in a prominent place in the church. A poster detailing who to contact about safeguarding concerns should also be displayed in a prominent place in each church. (2 posters per church were sent out in January 2019– please get in touch if you require more). Relevant people need to undergo safeguarding training and relevant people need to have an up to date DBS check. Every PCC is encouraged to formulate a "Parish Safeguarding Action Plan", this is a 2 page document containing a short check list of actions to carry out. A template for the action plan can be downloaded from our website together with an action plan example.

Autumn 2021 – Advance notice of a parish safeguarding audit.

It is important for the diocese to gauge how well it is meeting its safeguarding responsibilities. Therefore, it is our intention to carry out a parish safeguarding audit between July and December this year. The audit will consist of each parish being requested to return its parish safeguarding action plan detailing its progress against listed actions. A more detailed communication regarding this will be sent out during July.

Policy and Practice Guidance relating to safeguarding within the church.

There is an extensive amount of policy and practice guidance relating to safeguarding in the church. Please refer to the last page of the attached information sheet for more detailed information. The list can seem quite daunting but when you actually delve into each policy it is all pretty self-explanatory and easy to follow. All policies are available to download from the main Church of England website. I want to draw your attention to new guidance for PCCs on identifying safeguarding serious incidents and reporting to the charity commission. A new updated policy in relation to safer recruitment and people management is due to be launched in May this year. Any member of the safeguarding team can assist with any query in relation to any of these policies so please do get in touch. It is important that you are aware of the existence of policy and how to access it.

Safeguarding Team – Contact

Diocesan Safeguarding Officer; Mandy McPhee m.mcphee@hereford.anglican.org 07875757396 / 07999020876

Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Officer: Angela Ayliffe safeguarding@hereford.anglican.org 07593817717

Safeguarding DBS and Training Administrator: Rachel Arnold-Kent dbsadmin@hereford.anglican.org 01432 373317

The safeguarding team are here to assist you regarding any aspect of safeguarding and your church role. You can contact any one of us by email or telephone and we will be happy to help.

As and when we are able to, we will be happy to travel out and meet with Individuals or PCCs or other interested groups.

Thank you for all you do in carrying out your church roles, you all play a vital part. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and the accompanying information sheet. More information is available via the diocesan website or the safeguarding pages of the Church of England website and directly from any member of the safeguarding team.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mandy".

Mandy McPhee

Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.