



## Benefice of Bruton and District

### **SAFEGUARDING POLICY: 2024**

The Benefice of Bruton and District consists of the following 4 parishes:

- Bruton (with Wyke Champflower and Redlynch)
- Brewham
- Pitcombe
- Shepton Montague

#### **Introduction and Aims**

The Church of England, in all aspects of its life, is committed to and will promote the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It fully accepts and endorses the Children Acts 1989 & 2004 & The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

This Benefice has adopted the Church of England's "Promoting a Safer Church" as its safeguarding policy.

Christian communities should be places where all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse. The Church is particularly called by God to support those less powerful and those without a voice in our society. Our Benefice is working towards creating a safe and non-discriminatory environment by being aware of some of the particular situations that create vulnerability. Issues which need to be considered include both the physical environment and the attitudes of workers and volunteers.

A person (adult or child) who might be considered vulnerable has the right to:

- Be treated with respect and dignity.
- Have their privacy respected.
- Be able to lead as independent a life as possible.
- Be able to choose how to lead their life.
- Have the protection of the law.
- Have their rights upheld regardless of their ethnicity, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religion or cultural background.
- Be able to use their chosen language or method of communication.
- Be heard.

In any situations where there may be a difference of opinion about priorities, the welfare of any child or vulnerable adult should be the paramount concern.

This Benefice will foster and encourage best practice within its community by setting standards for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. It will work with the Diocesan



Safeguarding team, statutory bodies, voluntary agencies and other faith communities to promote the safety and well-being of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

### **Our Commitment to Safeguarding**

We are committed to acting promptly whenever a concern is raised about a child, young person or vulnerable adult or about the behaviour of an adult in a position of trust, and will work with the Diocesan Team, and the appropriate statutory bodies when an investigation is necessary. We are also committed to the support of those who have been abused and to listening to the voices of survivors, who can help the church learn lessons from the past.

This statement of principles applies to children, young people and adults.

We are committed to:

- The care, nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children, young people and adults
- The safeguarding and protection of all children and adults
- The establishment of a safe, caring community which provides an environment where there is a culture of informed vigilance regarding the dangers of abuse, and where victims of abuse can report or disclose abuse and find support.
- The promotion of best practice that contributes to the prevention of abuse.

The safeguarding and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility, not just parents or those who have formal leadership or caring responsibilities. Procedures and formal processes alone, though essential, will not protect children and adults. The community, including all its members, needs to be aware of the dangers and be prepared to report concerns and take action if necessary.

We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility for children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church in line with safer recruitment principles, including taking up references and the use of criminal records checks.

### **Key People and Recruitment**

While creating a safe culture is the responsibility of all, there are a number of key people to take a lead on safeguarding matters. Within the Benefice, the key people are the Rector and the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO, a voluntary role). Other people (clergy and lay leaders) who have had recent safeguarding training will work to promote this policy and procedures within their areas of responsibility. The PCC must also be familiar with this policy and are responsible for adopting and helping to implement it. In addition we have the support of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and national framework of the CofE.

The suitability of an applicant or nominated volunteer for work with children, young people or vulnerable adult should not be solely dependent upon Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) disclosures and vetting checks. Someone whose DBS disclosure is clear may still be unsuitable. Hence the need for an interview and references to assure ourselves, as far as we can, that someone is suitable.

As part of the Safer Recruitment process, it is the policy of this Benefice that:



- All those who regularly work with children, young people and vulnerable adults including those who work on a rota, should have enhanced DBS checks if they reach the criteria;
- Those who work only occasionally will be asked to apply for a DBS check if they reach the criteria;
- Those who manage or supervise people who work with vulnerable groups will be required to be DBS plus Barred List checked if they reach the criteria.

Our Parish Safeguarding Officer will be familiar with the criteria for DBS checks, and advise on their applicability. Our PSO will keep a record of all church officers in the Benefice who have been approved to work with children and vulnerable adults, and their current DBS status. This information will be supplied initially by the Rector and PCC, and the PSO will be kept fully informed of any updates. For the full Safer Recruitment guidance, see the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy.

### **Church Events**

This Benefice accepts that, through its workers and volunteers, it is responsible for children, young people and vulnerable adults when in a church building, on church property and other premises being used by the church and during church activities. Responsibility extends to travel between places, when it is organized by the church. However, a church is not responsible for private arrangements.

All church events will be subject to a Risk Assessment which will be reviewed annually for regular groups.

Registration and consent forms are not required for attendance at worship, although if young children regularly attend without their parents or carers, we will make contact with a parent/carer.

We will obtain contact details and special requirements (i.e. dietary, medical conditions) for all who regularly attend other church activities, such as Sunday schools, youth groups and mixed- age activities such as choirs, and registers will be taken. Consent will be obtained for all activities and should include, as appropriate, consent for making and using appropriate images of children.

We commit to the recommended minimum staffing levels for children's groups, as given below from the Diocesan Policy.

- 0–2 yrs: 1 person for every 3 children
- 2–3 yrs: 1 person for every 4 children
- 3–8 yrs: 1 person for every 8 children
- Over 8 yrs 1 person for the first 8 children then 1 extra person for every extra 12 children

We will always have at least two adults for each group and will aim that there should be at least one male and one female. If small groups are in the same room or adjoining rooms with open access between them then it is possible to have only one adult per group, dependent on the nature of the activity.

### **Concerns, Allegations, Disclosures, Complaints: what to do**

The term 'complaint' can cover an allegation, disclosure or statement, something seen or something heard. The complaint need not be made in writing but once received it must be recorded and acted upon. Complaints can be taken from alleged victims and third parties.



The procedure can be summarized as follows:

Listen – listen to what is being alleged / disclosed do not judge or investigate, and do not promise confidentiality.

Report – report the concern or disclosure to the right person

Record – keep a note of what has been said and what you have done to report it.

The following gives the procedure in more detail:

If any member of the congregations or visitor to one of our churches has a concern about a child or vulnerable adult, the normal first point of contact will be the Rector, who will then inform the Parish Safeguarding Officer; unless it is a concern or allegation directly against the Rector, in which case you should contact the PSO directly.

It is also foreseeable that concerns may be raised with another member of the Clergy, a Church Warden or an authorised lay leader (for example, Sunday Club leader); these individuals must then pass on this concern in accordance with the above, i.e. to the Rector or PSO.

Following a concern or allegation being raised, the Rector or Parish Safeguarding Officer will then consult Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.

In an emergency, any member of or visitor to the church must call police or social services, and then inform the Rector and/or PSO.

If you receive from a third party a disclosure or allegation of abuse, a written record must be kept. Members of the congregation are encouraged to keep notes, however, it is acceptable for the Rector or PSO to generate this written record as it is reported to them. These records will be stored securely in the Benefice Office in accordance with the Benefice Data Protection policy.

Members of the congregation should not share information any more widely than with the individuals and agencies stated above, for the safety and protection of all. Neither will members of the congregation undertake to investigate any concerns themselves.

All of the above procedures apply to allegations or concerns of both a current and historic nature.

If a child, young person or vulnerable adult comes to our notice as having suffered abuse in the past, we will notify the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and appropriate authorities to ensure that the matter is on record. Support will be offered to adult survivors of child abuse, who will also be encouraged to make a statement to the Police if they have not done so before.

### **A Culture of Care**

We will seek to offer informed pastoral care and support to anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry that recognises the importance of understanding the needs of those who have been abused, including their feelings of alienation and / or isolation. We recognise that anyone can be a victim of abuse in any setting, including in their own home, and in a church environment, and will work hard to make our church a safe place for people to disclose any concerns they have and receive appropriate support. We will seek to protect survivors of abuse from the possibility of further harm and abuse.



We will seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust and responsibility, where they are trusted by others.

We will seek to offer pastoral care and support, including supervision, and referral to the appropriate authorities, to any member of our Church community known to have offended against a child, young person or adult who is vulnerable. We will support them in continuing to attend church services whilst supervising their attendance to reduce the risk of further harm.

### **Implementation of this Policy**

This Benefice agrees to follow the Practice Guidance from the House of Bishops on safeguarding matters, and to adopt the Diocese of Bath and Wells Safeguarding Policies.

We commit to reviewing annually this policy and our safeguarding processes.

We commit to providing a safeguarding report for every PCC meeting in the Benefice.

### **Contacts:**

The Rector: Rev'd. Jonathan Evans - 01749 812775, 07305 736042, [rector@stmarysbruton.org](mailto:rector@stmarysbruton.org)

Parish Safeguarding Officer: Juliet Bowell – 01749 8122422, 07788 444901  
[julietcapulet@btinternet.com](mailto:julietcapulet@btinternet.com)

Deputy Parish Safeguarding Officer - Maria Viney - 01963 440845, 07979 528496.  
[mariarviney@gmail.com](mailto:mariarviney@gmail.com)

Diocesan Safeguarding manager – Ben Goodhind - 01749 588917  
[ben.goodhind@bathwells.anglican.org](mailto:ben.goodhind@bathwells.anglican.org)

North Somerset Children's Social Care - 01275 888266

North Somerset Care Connect Adult Social Care - 01275 888801

NSPCC - 0808 800 5000

Childline - 0800 1111

Avon and Somerset Constabulary - 0845 456 7000