

Safeguarding – ‘Ensuring a Safe Church for All’

Introduction

‘Jesus had a very clear message about the most vulnerable people. It's a theme which is replicated throughout the whole Bible, with God portrayed in the 121st psalm as the keeper of Israel. This Hebrew word can be translated as Safeguard, which is God's need and wish for the Church, not only that we are safe, but we all work for the safety of all people.’

([The Church of Scotland Theology of Safeguarding](#))

Safeguarding underpins the theological imperative to care for the most vulnerable people that we engage with in our life and work. It is a permanent and necessary part of Church life. Everyone has the right to feel safe and cared for in the Church and it is also the responsibility of everyone in the Church.

The Church of Scotland's Safeguarding framework seeks to adopt a preventive approach to Safeguarding through:

- Policy and procedures
- Clear lines of accountability/responsibility
- Safer Recruitment practices
- Safeguarding Training and awareness raising
- Whistleblowing/complaints
- Safe working practices
- Managing safe inclusion of those who pose a risk
- Audit and review

Equality, diversity and inclusion

The Safeguarding Service is committed to practicing in a way that supports everyone we come into contact with responsively and sensitively and in an inclusive manner by treating them with:

- Fairness
- Respect
- Equality
- Dignity
- Autonomy

The purpose of this handbook

The primary purpose of this handbook is to provide a framework within which those responsible for the support and protection of children and adults at risk can operate effectively while complying with legislation and the policies and procedures of the Church.

It is for:

- Ministers and all clergy
- Individuals working with children and protected adults in the Church
- Boys' Brigade and Girls' Brigade volunteers
- Pastoral Care Visitors
- All paid staff in the Church, including all Ministries Development Staff and Faith Action Staff
- Everyone in the Church who has an interest in safeguarding and in 'Ensuring a Safe Church for all'

Those with responsibilities for the scrutiny and support of Safeguarding activities:

- Kirk Sessions
- Assembly Trustees
- Safeguarding Coordinators
- Presbytery Safeguarding Contacts
- Safeguarding Trainers
- Presbytery Clerks
- All of the above Church post holders in the Presbyteries of Scotland, England, International Presbytery and the Presbytery of Jerusalem
- Other groups within and out with the Church who have an interest in the delivery or outcome of our safeguarding activity

This handbook has been developed to help you to:

- Have an overview of what Safeguarding means in the context of the Church of Scotland
- Understand the principles behind safeguarding and the activity of child and adult protection
- Understand your role and responsibility in relation to safeguarding
- Understand the impact of national legislation, policies, guidance and church law
- Be aware of the impact of trauma and adverse childhood experiences on individuals
- Know how to recognise the signs of abuse
- Increase confidence that relevant people know procedures to be followed by everyone across the Church in responding to harm or abuse e.g., the 4 Rs of safeguarding: Recognise, Report, Record and Refer

- Know the Church of Scotland structures and roles which should be in place in all local congregations and presbyteries to prevent harm or abuse
- Provide an overview of the support available from the Safeguarding Service

The guidance in this document is also supported by an ongoing programme of Safeguarding training, particularly for those working directly with vulnerable groups and/or for those with trustee responsibilities.

The following chapters underpin the [Church's Safeguarding Act](#) which was passed by the General Assembly in 2018 and complements the [Church of Scotland Safeguarding Policy Statement](#) and the Code of Good Safeguarding Practice (Appendix 1).

The Church's key Safeguarding message is:

If you suspect or witness harm or abuse, or it is reported to you, you must immediately report it to your Safeguarding Coordinator or line manager.

Trust your intuition or gut feeling about the person or the situation – if it looks or feels wrong then it probably is. In safeguarding it is sometimes necessary to think the unthinkable about a person or situation.

We would much rather that you spoke to your Safeguarding Coordinator or line manager if you are not sure about something rather than waiting until you're absolutely sure. Not sharing a concern may result in abuse or harm continuing.

The Safeguarding Service will continue to maintain and regularly review the material contained in this handbook to ensure that it is fit for purpose and compatible with national legislation and guidance.

Contacting the Safeguarding Service

The Safeguarding Service is available 9.00am-5.00 pm, Monday to Friday. You can leave a telephone or email message out with this time.

If your concern is very urgent, a person is in immediate danger or a crime has occurred, please contact Police Scotland on 999 or 101 immediately.

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