**Safeguarding Guidance for Parishes – Implementation of national policy and practice guidance**

1. What this document covers

This documents provides guidance to parishes on how to respond to two documents issued by the Church of England in 2017 which have a significant impact on safeguarding implementation in parishes. These are:

* Promoting a Safer Church (Safeguarding policy statement for children, young people and adults)
* Key Roles and Responsibilities of Church Office Holders and Bodies Practice Guidance
1. Keeping it Simple

The Diocesan Safeguarding Oversight Group is working to make it as straightforward as possible for all parishes to ensure that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place. In order to do this we seek to work through incremental change, using familiar documents which evolve over time and relating new guidance and requirements to policies and procedures which are already in place. If you read this document carefully and follow the five steps which it lays out then your parish will be doing what it needs to do to respond to these new documents.

1. Adopting the new policy

Currently the Diocese provides two model parish safeguarding policies

* Child Safeguarding Policy; and
* Safeguarding Adults.

The new national policy covers both under 18s and adults. It is a high level document which provides a framework rather than offering detailed policy commitments. The detail will follow in due course in the form of additional Practice Guidance documents. Key Roles and Responsibilities is the first of these documents, but the others have not yet been published.

For 2018, therefore, parishes are asked to adopt *Promoting a Safer Church* alongside the existing model diocesan policies, as the existing policies contain the more detailed policy commitments. The model policies have been revised to reflect this, but there are not significant changes. Please note that the PCC must have read and considered *Promoting a Safer Church* rather than simply putting it through ‘on the nod’.

**Step 1: Use the new (January 2018) diocesan model policies when reviewing your parish’s Safeguarding policies in 2018. Ensure the PCC has read and considered *Promoting a Safer Church*.**

1. Impact of Roles and Responsibilities Practice Guidance

The Practice Guidance contains detailed information about roles and responsibilities at parish level. Mainly this covers the role of the PCC and incumbent, churchwardens and Safeguarding Coordinator (referred to as Parish Safeguarding Officer, or PSO, in the Practice Guidance). Paragraph 3.1 in the Practice Guidance, which covers the role of the PCC and incumbent, effectively forms a checklist of what the parish needs to about safeguarding.

This section is, in fact, turned into a checklist in appendix 7 (pages 48-50) to the document. Parishes in this Diocese, however, will be more familiar with the diocesan template for a Safeguarding Annual Report to the PCC. This diocesan template has therefore been updated to include those points from the Practice Guidance which were not already covered.

**Step 2: Use the new (January 2018) diocesan template for an annual safeguarding report to the PCC and ensure that a copy of this (along with all necessary appendices) is sent to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.**

**Step 3: Ensure that the churchwardens know that a copy of the report has been sent to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. This will mean that the churchwardens have to answer fewer questions on the Archdeacons’ Articles of Enquiry form.**

1. Action Plan – Identify the Gaps

One of the requirements of Promoting a Safer Church is that each parish has an action plan that sets out how the policy is being put into action. This is to ensure that churches understand that simply adopting the policy is not enough on its own: implementation is important too.

Completing the diocesan Safeguarding Annual Report template referred to in the previous section will identify gaps in current safeguarding provision. Even in the most advanced parishes (in terms of safeguarding) it is likely that there will be some gaps, eg not everybody has attended training yet. Once the gaps have been identified these should be put into an action plan. The action plan does not need to be a long document: it is enough to have 4-8 action points with the following information:

* What needs to be done
* Who is going to do it
* What is the deadline for doing it
* Are there are any budget or other resource implications
* How we will know when it’s done

Item 1 on the list could be adopting Promoting a Safer Church. This should be easy to achieve!

**Step 4: Use the Safeguarding Annual Report to identify gaps in current safeguarding provision and then put these into an action plan. Send the action plan to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team as an appendix to the annual report.**

1. What if there are a lot of gaps?

If there are a lot of gaps you should start with what is most important, but it needs to be done as a matter of urgency.

Start with ensuring that

* The diocesan model policies (January 2018) have been adopted and copies sent to the Diocese
* Both roles of Child Safeguarding Coordinator and Safeguarding Adults Coordinator are covered (which can be done by the same person) and that the Diocese has the name(s) and contact details
* The local clergy and the Coordinator(s) have attended all necessary diocesan safeguarding training
* The PCC knows who is working with under 18s and vulnerable adults on its behalf.

**Step 4a: If these basic things are not in place, get them in place as a matter of urgency. Contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team if you need help.**

1. Report to the APCM

The diocesan annual report template is for an Annual Report to the PCC. The APCM does not need this level of detail and should not be given information about cases or blemished disclosures.

The report to the APCM should contain the following

* Name(s) of Safeguarding Coordinator(s)
* Names of any other people with a leadership role in safeguarding in the parish
* Confirmation that the PCC has adopted Promoting a Safer Church (via the Jan 2018 diocesan model policies) or that this is in hand
* Key points of the action plan

The report to the APCM is also an opportunity to remind people that safeguarding is part of the church’s ministry.

**Step 5: Make sure that safeguarding is included on the APCM agenda and provide a report containing the key points. This is a very simple report containing the points identified above.**

1. What about future years?

We anticipate that over the coming year the National Safeguarding Team will issue further Practice Guidance to complement the new *Promoting a Safer Church* policy. This new national guidance is likely to include a template Safeguarding Handbook. It is likely, therefore, that the new guidance will ultimately replace existing diocesan policies and procedures. However, we do not know exactly when this new Practice Guidance will appear. The document you are currently reading, therefore, sets out the position until anything changes!