

NORTH WESTMORLAND BENEFICE

Benefice Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

Section 5A of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016¹ requires **relevant persons** (which includes all authorised clergy, licensed readers and lay workers, churchwardens and parochial church councils) to comply with the requirements imposed by the safeguarding Code of Practice issued by the House of Bishops. It also authorises the House of Bishops to give guidance in connection with those requirements. It is an offence under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003² for any priest or deacon not to comply with the requirements, or fail to have “due regard” to House of Bishops’ guidance.

In a large benefice such as ours, composed of many small PCCs, churches and other venues, numerous ministries and significant aspirations to serve people who are considered vulnerable, it is especially challenging for **relevant persons** to discharge these duties. It is also inevitable that different PCCs and churches will be of different sizes and capabilities, varying in their ability and the availability of personnel to discharge the duties imposed upon them.

It is therefore desirable to have a degree of team working, central oversight and support for all the relevant persons, as well a degree of uniformity in documents and practice across the Benefice. This policy seeks to provide these foundations, seeking excellence in safeguarding practice, freeing the people of God in North Westmorland to serve Him and their neighbours safely and effectively.

In pursuit of which aims, the Benefice and PCCs of North Westmorland have adopted this policy.

It should be noted that this policy largely serves to document the good practice which has developed between Sarah Banks and individual PCCs, PSOs and Churchwardens over recent years. It does not introduce significant new responsibilities for PCCs or their officers.

A. Preliminaries

1. Nothing in this policy is to be taken to avoid or reduce the responsibility of individual relevant persons under the 2016 Measure, but rather to assist them in achieving best practice in compliance therewith.
2. In accordance with Church of England Safeguarding Policy, the Benefice and its constituent PCCs are committed to:
 - a. Promoting a safer environment and culture.
 - b. Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church, whether in paid/employed or voluntary posts.
 - c. Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation.
 - d. Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons.

¹ “**The 2016 Measure**”. Introduced by the Safeguarding (Code of Practice) Measure 2021, section 1.

² As amended by the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, section 5A.

- e. Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons.
- f. Responding to those who may pose a risk to others.

B. Benefice Safeguarding Structures

3. The **Benefice Safeguarding Team** shall consist of the following:
 - a. A **Benefice Safeguarding Officer** – currently Sarah Banks of Askham PCC.
 - b. A **Deputy Benefice Safeguarding Officer** – currently Ruth Hutchings, Benefice Growing Younger Minister.
 - c. The **Priest-in-Charge/Rector** of North Westmorland Benefice – currently Stephen Tudway.
4. The Benefice Safeguarding Officer may serve as Parish Safeguarding Officer in any parish that is unable to appoint an appropriate person to that role. In that event, the Parish in question will cooperate with the Benefice Safeguarding Officer so as to enable the performance of that duty.
5. The Benefice Safeguarding Team will:
 - a. Provide advice and support to other relevant persons within the Benefice and its constituent Parishes (and in particular to Parish Safeguarding Officers), in connection with the discharge of their safeguarding responsibilities.
 - b. Be aware of all ministries within the Benefice which do or may serve children or vulnerable adults and ensure that the relevant PCCs are supported in exercising good governance, oversight and safeguarding practice in relation to those ministries.
 - c. Support each PCC in fulfilling its responsibilities set out in section C below.
 - d. Provide a centralised system for carrying out DBS checks through the Diocesan DBS provider for the time being (currently the 31:8 Charity).
 - e. Maintain a Single Central Record (modelled on those required of schools), listing all those within the Benefice who work on behalf of PCCs in connection with children or vulnerable adults and assist in ensuring that the requirements of safer recruitment, DBS, references and training have been complied with in respect of all such persons.
 - f. Develop and provide to PCCs and Parish Safeguarding Officers documents and procedures for safeguarding, risk assessment and related matters.
 - g. Monitor the status of safeguarding in individual parishes, including through participation in the maintenance and monitoring of the relevant Safeguarding Dashboards.
 - h. Provide in-person safeguarding training at Basic and Foundation level every 12 to 24 months, at a location within the geographical boundary of the Benefice.
 - i. Maintain good and mutually beneficial working relationships with external stakeholders, including in particular the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.
 - j. Generally, promote best practice in safeguarding throughout the Benefice.



C. PCC Responsibilities

6. Each PCC in the Benefice will adopt a Parish Safeguarding Policy compliant with the content of the Church of England Model Parish Safeguarding Policy, which shall be provided to the PCC by the Benefice Safeguarding Team for annual review. In particular, each PCC will:
 - a. Create a safe and caring place for all.
 - b. Appoint a named Parish Safeguarding Officer (who may be the Benefice Safeguarding Officer) to work with the Priest in charge/Rector and the PCC to implement policy and procedures.
 - c. Ensure that there is appropriate insurance cover for all activities involving children and adults undertaken in the name of the parish.
 - d. Display in church premises and on the Parish website the details of who to contact if there are safeguarding concerns or support needs.
 - e. Listen to and take seriously all those who disclose abuse.
 - f. Take steps to protect children and adults when a safeguarding concern of any kind arises, following House of Bishops guidance, including notifying the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) and statutory agencies immediately.
 - g. Offer support to victims/survivors of abuse regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred.
 - h. Care for and monitor any member of the church community who may pose a risk to children and adults whilst maintaining appropriate confidentiality and the safety of all parties.
 - i. Ensure that health and safety policy, procedures and risk assessments are in place and that these are reviewed annually.
 - j. Review the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Practices at least annually.
7. In pursuit of the foregoing objectives, each PCC will, in particular:
 - a. Ensure that their Parish Safeguarding Dashboard is maintained and regularly checked by the Parish Safeguarding Officer. As a Benefice, we believe that proper engagement with the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard is key to our commitment to effective safeguarding.
 - b. Engage with the National Safeguarding Standards and Quality Assurance Framework during PCC meetings and use the worksheets provided for this purpose by the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard.
 - c. Ensure that the following are clearly displayed on church noticeboards:
 - i. A copy of the parish Safeguarding Policy.
 - ii. The blue/yellow “Promoting a Safer Church” poster, appropriately completed with relevant contact details.
 - iii. A poster for ‘Safe Spaces’ with tear-off contact slips. The contact slips should be pre-cut and one torn off to indicate that this may be done. Where the church in question has a lavatory, a copy of the poster should be displayed inside the door, so that a user can access the poster, or remove a tear-off slip, confidentially.
 - d. Maintain a standing agenda item for safeguarding at all PCC meetings.
 - e. Cooperate with the Benefice Safeguarding Team in order to enable it to carry out the roles set out in section 0 above.



D. Benefice activities

8. Most ministries in the Benefice will take place within the geographical bounds of a particular parish and/or on the premises of the relevant PCC. They will be clearly identifiable as the responsibility of a particular PCC. All ministries must be approved by the relevant PCC, in order to ensure good governance, oversight and safeguarding, as well as to ensure that proper insurance cover is maintained.
9. Some activities may take place within more than one parish of the Benefice. In such cases, the relevant ministry must be approved by the PCC of each parish in which it is to be conducted, or whose premises are to be used. Each relevant PCC must exercise governance and safeguarding oversight in respect of the ministry, regardless of the location in which the ministry may be exercised from time to time. Those responsible for the ministry in question, in consultation with the Benefice Safeguarding Team, will determine which PCC or PCCs is responsible and ensure that a proper relationship of accountability and oversight is established.

E. Activities shared with other organisations

10. Some ministries in our Benefice are clearly the responsibility of one or more PCCs. In some cases, however, it may not be clear whether the responsibility is that of our Benefice or PCC, or a third party partner. This might be the case, for example, when we run a youth group or club during the school day or after school. Third parties may include, for example, Network Youth Church, NISCU and our local primary schools.
11. Where we partner with a third party organisation, the Benefice Safeguarding Team will ensure that:
 - a. The third party organisation has adequate safeguarding policies and procedures, comparable to our own.
 - b. Safeguarding and related responsibilities (including risk assessments, health and safety, privacy and permissions) are clearly taken by one or more PCCs, and/or the third party, and that respective responsibilities are clearly agreed in writing.
12. Where we use our employees or volunteers to carry out a ministry in partnership with another organisation, we will assume that we have safeguarding responsibility for the activity and for those delivering it on our behalf (including safer recruitment, DBS checks and relevant training) unless it is clearly agreed that safeguarding responsibility will be taken by the third party organisation pursuant to its own policies and procedures (as where a school carries out separate checks on our volunteers working in school).

F. Logos and identification

13. It is important for those receiving our ministry to understand who is serving them, identify authorised persons, and understand how they can obtain information, make a complaint, or report a safeguarding concern.
14. In addition to the PCCs obligations in relation to the display of information, the Benefice Safeguarding Team will ensure that those involved in ministry to children and vulnerable adults are identifiable with the Benefice, either by wearing clerical dress and/or the use of visible lanyards bearing the Benefice logo.

