



## **Coventry Diocese Covid-19 safeguarding update and guidance**

**March 2020**

Hello from the Safeguarding Team,

We are very aware of the impact Covid-19 will have on the most vulnerable in our society and the heightened risk to those already experiencing abuse, neglect and exploitation given the current lock down situation. This is a real opportunity for the church to support their communities, showing compassion and sharing hope during this uncertain and worrying time. We want to support Coventry Diocese in achieving this safely for all involved.

This summary is to provide a brief update and guidance on how the safeguarding team is operating and how you can continue to keep your church and the wider community safe in these exceptional circumstances. We will keep you update on any changes according to the government and the Church of England National Safeguarding Team guidance.

We are here to help so please contact us (9am -5pm) via telephone or email on the below if you need any advice or support. The out of hours support by 31:8 also remains in place.

Sarah Price, DSA – 07950382934 (Mon-Fri)

Helen Tebbatt, DSO – 07398186353 (Mon-Fri)

Dara Lloyd, Assistant DSA – 07432741953 (Weds-Fri )

Debra Jennings, Assistant DSA – 07496369883 (Mon-Fri)

### **Safer recruitment**

We recognise these are exceptional circumstances and that you will continue to be making plans and arrangements to support both the church and your community.

We would encourage in the first instance for people to support their friends, family and neighbours who are in self-isolation.

### **Support for individuals**

Where possible it is important you use volunteers you already have safely recruited and if needed you can 'deploy' them into other voluntary roles.

Where you are needing to recruit new volunteers it is important that the Safer Recruitment guidance continues to be followed. This may seem disproportionate given the situation but we still have a responsibility to ensure any support being



offered by the church is safe and reduces the risk of people being exploited/placed at risk now or in the future.

If you have already identified people to support but they have not been safely recruited please ensure this is retrospectively done.

In terms of gaining references, these can initially be verbally via the telephone/video media, please ensure there is a written record of these conversations. This will then need to be followed up with a written reference.

In terms of interviews, these can be done via telephone/video media. An interview is a conversation with the volunteer to consider whether the person understands the role and their responsibilities, that they have the suitable experience, skills and knowledge to carry out the role and they understand how to report and respond to safeguarding concerns. Please provide each volunteer with a copy of the 'Coventry diocese safeguarding leaflet' attached and ask them to complete the basic safeguarding training online.

We appreciate the impact on time and resources for you all, if we can offer any assistance in the safer recruitment of new volunteers please contact the DST for support.

### **Organised volunteering**

We would recommend where possible that rather than setting up new voluntary services that you feed into existing local projects which have the right safeguarding policy and practices in place. There is a team within the diocese who are currently scoping local support for Coventry and Warwickshire and details will be sent out as soon as possible.

Once this information is available the DST will be the central point to offer support and assistance with this process.

The National Safeguarding Team have also been advised by the Office for Civil Society that new government guidance regarding organised volunteer services is being prepared and we will update you as soon as this is available.

If you are looking at setting up or already have set up a service for your local community (not church members) please contact the DST to help ensure you have the right safeguarding practices in place. The key areas of guidance to have covered are:

- Safer recruitment
- Safer environments and activities
- The process for reporting safeguarding concerns

### **Safeguarding records**

It is important that you keep a record of any support being offered by the church. Please see the attached template as an example record which you can use.



## **DBS checks**

We are advising if you are setting up arrangements or an organised group to support those who are in self-isolation such as collecting and dropping of shopping, providing support over the phone an enhanced DBS check will be required for the volunteer.

If you are uncertain if a DBS check is required in the first instance please contact the DST for advice.

The Disclosure and Barring Service have provided new temporary guidance advising the following steps can be taken to complete ID and document checks whilst complying with social distancing rules.

- ID documents to be viewed over video link
- Scanned images to be used in advance of the DBS check being submitted

The applicant will be required to present the original versions of these documents when they first attend their employment or volunteering role.

## **Offering support to care for children/young people**

There are legal and practical considerations if the church are offering to support with caring for other people's children or young people. If you are planning to set this up then you must speak to the DST first to ensure we have considered the relevant safeguarding policy, practice and legislation.

The National Safeguarding Team have advised we need to be aware that there are legal requirements that relate to looking after other people's children. The Childcare Act 2006 states that childcare is 'any form of care for a child, including education or any other supervised activity'. Most people caring for children under eight years old for more than two hours a day in England must register with Ofsted or a childminder agency. It is a criminal offence to provide unregistered childcare, or on unapproved premises, if you are legally required to register.

## **Social media and communication with young people**

We are in the process of writing a policy to support churches with enquiries relating to communicating with young people via social media and/or video media, we will send this to you shortly in the meantime please contact use with any enquiries.

## **New referrals and concerns**

If at any time you become aware of a safeguarding concern, allegation relating to children, young people and or vulnerable adults then the usual safeguarding process needs to be followed. These concerns need to continue to be reported within 24



hours to the DST and in an emergency the statutory agencies such as the police/social care must be informed.

Coventry MASH – 02476 788555, [mash@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:mash@coventry.gov.uk)

Warwickshire MASH – 01926 414144, [mash@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:mash@warwickshire.gov.uk)

Solihull MASH – 01217 884300, [connectcc@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:connectcc@solihull.gov.uk)

Police – 101 (999 in an emergency)

The DST are mainly working from home and arrangements have been in place for you to continue to use the office telephone number 02476 521345. Please also use the relevant work mobile numbers provided if you need to speak to a specific person within the team.

Please ensure that you record any concerns or allegations on the usual Record of concerns form and send to the Safeguarding team email address [safeguarding@covcofe.org](mailto:safeguarding@covcofe.org)

We will ensure that we confirm as soon as possible that we have received a referral but if you do not hear anything within 24 hours of emailing/leaving a telephone message please follow up with a further telephone call.

### **Safeguarding training**

All face to face safeguarding training has been suspended, this will be reviewed in line with the government guidance. Helen Tebbatt has sent an email to all those booked on to training to inform them and provide relevant safeguarding training resources.

Helen Tebbatt will be keeping a record of all who had booked on to the training and the National Safeguarding Team has confirmed that given the exceptional circumstances *'this constitutes a cogent reason why the House of Bishops guidance to have due regard to the need for safeguarding training to be completed for certain roles, has not been followed. It is acceptable for clergy to minister and for clergy to undertake their roles even if their training is overdue as a result of these exceptional circumstances.'*

If the basic or foundation training is due then there is an expectation that this is still completed online to remain in date. Helen Tebbatt will be sending an email to individuals this applies to as a reminder.

Helen Tebbatt has also sent an email to all PSO's to share the details of how to complete the online training.



## **Safeguarding agreements**

If you have a member of your congregation who is subject of a safeguarding agreement then the relevant member of the DST will be in contact over the next week to explain the arrangements to continue to safely manage this.

If you believe there is a need for a Safeguarding agreement with a member of your congregation please contact the safeguarding team by email or telephone so that we can arrange a plan and determine if this can wait given services are currently postponed.

## **Any safeguarding enquiries**

We want to provide the support you need in these exceptional circumstances, please do not hesitate to contact us and to share ideas of any other ways we could help you support your churches and community during these unprecedented times.

## **Policy/guidance**

The National Safeguarding Team Covid-19 safeguarding guidance and FAQs  
<https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/promoting-safer-church-safeguarding>

## **Other support links**

**Child-line:** [0800 1111](https://www.childline.org.uk) (lines free and open 24 hours). Phone if you are a child or young person and are worried about anything

<https://www.childline.org.uk/toolbox/calm-zone/> for a child friendly explanation and support for children and young people who are struggling with the situation and becoming anxious. <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/childrens-mental-health/depression-anxiety-mental-health/> advice for parents to support children

## **National Council for Voluntary Organisations website**

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/i-want-to-volunteer/volunteering-coronavirus>

**Age UK** <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/discover/2020/03/ways-to-help-older-people-coronavirus/>

**National Domestic Violence Helpline:** [0808 2000 247](https://www.ndvh.org.uk) (lines free and open 24 hours). Phone if you are experiencing domestic abuse.

**Coventry Women's Aid:** [www.coventryhaven.co.uk](http://www.coventryhaven.co.uk)

**Samaritans Helpline:** 08457 90 90 90 (open 24 hours). Phone if you feel you are struggling to cope and need someone to talk too.