

A Policy of
The Parish of Saint Melangell
for the
Safeguarding of Minors and Vulnerable Adults

Date of adoption: 17th June, 2021

Date of revision: 25th April, 2024

1. Introduction

As Orthodox Christians seeking the spiritual life and carrying out locally in Great Britain and Northern Ireland the mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations, we find ourselves with both the opportunity and the responsibility to affirm our calling and commitment to protect and safeguard from harm the most vulnerable members of our community: namely our children, our young persons, and any adults rendered vulnerable by illness, disability, life experience, or social, economic, or interpersonal circumstances.

2. The Purpose of a Safeguarding Policy

The Church must contend with the reality of sin amongst her members, as well as the fragility of our fallen, wounded human nature, both of which can lead to the most vulnerable members of and visitors to Christian churches being abused by members of the Church. Regrettably, the experience of the Church has shown that even those in positions of service and trust within the Church can and do sin against children, young persons, and adults committed to their care.

While the incidences of this failing are not common, even one occurrence is one too many. Therefore, the safeguarding policy and practices of our Parish have two aims:

- They are pro-active measures designed to ensure that all steps that can be taken to prevent, or at least reduce the likelihood of the abuse of children, young persons, or adults within the Parish will be taken.
- They provide guidance on how best to support and protect from further harm those who in some way have experienced abuse within the Church.

In addition to the commitment to safeguarding born of our faith, as a charity, we have under the law a duty of care towards those with whom we come into contact, especially the safeguarding of children, young persons, and vulnerable adults. That means, amongst other things, that our church must do, and must be seen to do, all within our ability pro-actively to protect our most vulnerable members from harm by other members of our Parish community. That safeguarding is enforced by legislation in no way diminishes or takes away from the reality that it is simply the practical, concrete manifestation of our core Christian calling to love one another, with special emphasis on looking after those who are most vulnerable.

3. Developing a Culture of Safeguarding

The effectiveness of our safeguarding policy and practices will depend entirely on our attitude to safeguarding. We must seek insofar as we are able to avoid an attitude of dismissiveness of the necessity of or motives behind a policy of safeguarding and instead to instil among ourselves a mindset of embracing the benefits of understanding safeguarding as an essential part of the operation and functioning of our Parish.

4. Our Principles of Safeguarding

We are committed to:

- Pastoral ministry based on the loving, respectful care and nurturing of all children, young persons and all adults.
- Prioritising the issues of safeguarding and protecting all children, young persons, and adults in our care.
- Taking all necessary steps to establish a safe, caring community which provides a loving and compassionate environment where victims of abuse can report or disclose abuse, and where they can find support and care delivered in accordance with the standards set by recognised best practice in this area.
- Developing the necessary pastoral resources in order to foster an appropriately informed ministry that can recognise and respond to the unique needs of those who have been abused.

To this end:

- We will carefully select, support, and train all those with any pastoral responsibility within the Parish, in line with both existing statutory requirements and in line with standards set by best practice in this area, including the use of criminal records disclosures and registration/membership of the relevant vetting and barring schemes.
- We will respond without delay to every complaint made, that any adult, young person or child may have been harmed, or is at risk of harm, co-operating with police and local authorities in any investigation(s).
- We will seek to offer informed pastoral care and support to anyone who has suffered abuse.
- We will seek to protect survivors of abuse from the possibility of further harm or abuse.

- We will seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust and/or authority.
- We will seek to offer appropriate pastoral care and support to any member of our Parish community suspected or convicted of having offended against a child, young person, or vulnerable adult.

5. A Code of Conduct

We all bear responsibility – individually and collectively – for ensuring the safeguarding of children, young people, and vulnerable adults. While the conditions of church life mean that it will never be possible to eliminate all opportunity for inappropriate behaviour, there are reasonable steps that we can all take to reduce the likelihood of such activity, both to protect the vulnerable and also to guard ourselves against misunderstandings which may lead to suspicion and accusations.

Therefore, we seek to model our behaviour, insofar as possible, on good practice which is expressed in, but is not limited to, the following guidance.

All people must:

- Treat all individuals with respect and dignity.
- Ensure that their own language, tone of voice, and body language are respectful.
- Record and report any concerns about a child, young person, or adult and/or the behaviour of another worker with their activity leader and/or Parish Safeguarding Officer, and sign and date the record.
- Obtain consent for any photographs/videos to be taken, shown, displayed, or stored.
- Where possible, ensure there are others around if administering any First Aid.

In addition, when working with children, young people, and vulnerable adults:

- Always aim to work with or within sight of another adult (this includes the hearing of confessions and the offering of spiritual counsel in person, insofar as circumstances allow.)
- Ensure another adult is informed if a child or vulnerable adult needs to be taken to the toilet.
- Respond warmly to a child who needs comforting but make sure there are other adults present.
- Ensure that the child and parents/guardians are aware of any activity that requires physical contact and its nature before the activity takes place.

6. Monitoring of Those Who Present a Known Risk

It is vitally important that, should a person present himself or herself in our Parish community, who is a known risk to children, young persons, or vulnerable adults – whether that person is Orthodox or not – that the Parish should have a workable contract which follows our safeguarding principles. This risk could include convictions for sexual offences, targeting vulnerable adults for financial gain, or other forms of abuse. This contract would need to be discussed with and then signed by the Subject.

Such a contract may also prove necessary when someone who belongs to our community proves to be, from local intelligence, a possible risk to children or vulnerable adults even if they have never acted upon their impulses or indeed been convicted of any crime.

In drawing up such a contract, various factors would need to be taken into account. For example, church events and activities vary insofar as they give access to children and vulnerable adults. Additionally, in some church buildings there are unseen corners, corridors, and rooms and in others it is completely open plan. As our Parish currently does not own its own premises and as our activities are determined at least in part by the nature and availability of the premises that we hire, it is not feasible to formulate a “one size fits all” contract. This would need to be drafted if the situation should arise when it is needed, according to our circumstances and activities as they stand at the time.

However, there are some foundational principles which should be observed when drawing up such a contract.

1. Most important is, of course, supervision. No contact with children or vulnerable adults should be allowed without active and continuous monitoring of a person or persons designated and trained for that purpose. These supervisors should have undertaken a suitable safeguarding training course.
2. The subject should not be allowed to undertake forms of church service that primarily involve contact with children and vulnerable adults; in other words, any contact must always be in a mixed environment with adults and children – Sunday school/children’s clubs are not possible.
3. They should also not be allowed to take up any position of leadership in any sector of church life for this gives them an authority which they might seek to abuse in the community, nor should they undertake any activity which would reasonably imply any degree of trust in the community.
4. Accountability lies at the heart of keeping children and vulnerable adults safe when a person who is a known risk is present. This is probably best provided for by having regular meetings between the subject, his/her supervisors, and the Rector. The frequency should be determined on a case-by-case basis but these should take place at least monthly, unless of course something happens in the meanwhile. Some of the business of these meetings will be highly confidential, if not in a confessional context where of course the seal cannot be broken. Nonetheless, there is the need for an opportunity for the subject to have a private conversation with the Rector and maybe those having supervision about his or her struggles and how they could be resolved with any necessary plan of action and reporting back. All these elements of

accountability and their practical implementation should be written into the contract, signed off, and consistently implemented indefinitely. Confidential logs should be kept in case they need to be produced at a later date.

5. There is also the issue of what happens if a person who is a known risk, for whatever reason, were to leave our Parish community for another church community or take part in the life of another church community concurrently with ours. The principles of safeguarding dictate that there needs to be information sharing with the other community. However, there are possible GDPR implications in the sharing of such sensitive data. Consequently, it should also be written into the contract that, should such a situation arise, the Subject acknowledges that a sharing of information (outside of the confessional) will take place together with a handover meeting. If the Subject refuses to consent to this or any other clause in the contract, then there must be consequences that are disadvantageous to him or her.

Level	Offence/Issue	Consequences & Action
4	The Subject refuses to sign the Safeguarding Contract	The Subject is instructed to leave the Parish community immediately. There is no need to advise any other church on the assumption that other churches would have their own safeguarding policies in place.
3	The Subject makes an accidental infringement of the Contract.	Immediate feedback is given by the Supervisor. The Subject modifies his or her behaviour accordingly.
2	The Subject intentionally is guilty of an infraction of the Contract, but no child or vulnerable adult is harmed.	The Subject is instructed to leave the Parish community immediately. The bishop is informed, as well as the clergy of the other Orthodox churches in the Greater Manchester area.
1	The Subject is intentionally guilty of an infraction of the Contract and a child or vulnerable adult suffers actual harm - psychologically, emotionally or physically, no matter how the courts might categorise that in statutory terms.	The incident is immediately reported to the Police and any other appropriate Authority. The bishop is informed, together with the clergy of all of the Orthodox churches in the Greater Manchester area, as well as of other churches in the Wythenshawe area, taking care not to assume guilt before the law has judged on the matter. Information shared should always refer to "allegations".

7. Responding to Safeguarding Incidents

This section identifies what actions should be taken when a safeguarding concern is raised. This may relate to allegations made about a person with pastoral responsibility, a member or volunteer, or someone not connected with the Church where anyone is seeking help or support from someone in the Church.

The concerns may be about current or past events, but the response should be the same. Past events can still give rise to current safeguarding concerns.

Allegations that do not fall into the above categories but still amount to inappropriate conduct within the Church may mean that consideration needs to be given to invoking disciplinary processes or handling it by way of advice, supervision, and training. In these situations, the Trustees and the Parish Safeguarding Officer will need to decide on the appropriate course of action.

1. Listening - If anyone is approached by a child or vulnerable adult (or someone else on their behalf) with a concern about a possible safeguarding incident, their first duty is to listen sensitively and to make notes on the conversation either during, or immediately after the conversation, noting the date and time that the conversation took place. If at all possible, the Parish Safeguarding Officer should be involved in the first disclosure of safeguarding concerns with the consent of the individual making the disclosure, or - failing that - a person with pastoral responsibility (who has received relevant training outlines in Section 7), provided this does not result in a conflict of interests and the individual making the disclosure consents to this involvement.
2. Emergency Response - Having heard the concern, either first-hand or from the individual to whom the disclosure was made, the Parish Safeguarding Officer will then need to decide whether the information received requires the involvement of the Police or some other Authority. This is always the case when the child or vulnerable person concerned is at immediate risk of further harm, if the individual concerned is suffering from my physical or mental pain or anguish requiring proper assessment or treatment, or if the individual concerned is subject to some form of pressure, control or intimidation. Help should also be sought for those whose vulnerability is exacerbated by a lack of proper food or adequate accommodation. If an emergency response is activated, the Rector must be informed immediately.
3. Non-emergency Response - If the Parish Safeguarding Officer determines that the nature of the complaint does not require an emergency response, the complaint or concern must still be discussed with the Rector within 24 hours. After this the Rector and Safeguarding Officer will then decide what course of action should be taken.
 - a. If the Rector and Safeguarding Officer determine that there are no further concerns about either the child or vulnerable adult or any member of the parish community, then the decision will be recorded and stored, together with other safeguarding incident reports, by the Secretary to the Trustees.
 - b. If the Rector and Safeguarding Officer still have concerns about the safety and welfare of the child or vulnerable adult concerned, then they will make a

decision to refer the incident to another authority or statutory agency, such as the police or social services. This decision will also be stored by the Secretary to the Trustees.

- c. If the Rector and Safeguarding Officer have no further concerns for the safety or welfare of a child or vulnerable adult, but continue to have concerns about a member of the parish community and/or person exercising pastoral responsibility in the Parish, then the Rector and Safeguarding Officer will make a decision to refer the matter to the relevant authority or statutory agency, such as the police or probation services. The decision to refer the matter must also be recorded and stored with other incident reports, by the Secretary to the Trustees.
 - d. After a referral is made, the Safeguarding Officer and Rector must continue to liaise with the relevant authority or statutory agency, following all instructions and advice given to them by these authorities.
4. Each incident and its response must be reviewed by the Trustees and the Safeguarding Officer at the next meeting of the Trustees, or within one month of receiving the complaint (whichever is sooner) and, in the case of an ongoing investigation by the relevant authorities, Trustees must be given monthly updates by the Parish Safeguarding Officer. This review must result in an evaluation of the Parish's response to the incident and record any suggestions as to how this response could have been more effective. Trustees must implement any changes, either to established procedures or this policy document, that are recommended by a higher authority or statutory agency.

8. Safeguarding Training and Background Checks for Those with Pastoral Responsibility

In accordance with the Principles of Safeguarding outlined above in Section 4, we will ensure that all those who are charged with some form of pastoral responsibility within the Parish - responsibilities that place them in positions of trust or authority over children, young people and vulnerable adults - will receive adequate training in Safeguarding principles and practices. This training must be an established course, and may be given by a public body (a local authority, educational institution, Church or other religious institution) or else may be provided by a reputable private training company. Completion of such training is mandatory within 2 weeks of appointment to a position of pastoral responsibility (as outlined below) and will be regarded as an essential condition for continued exercise of this responsibility.

Additionally, all those who exercise some form of pastoral responsibility within the Parish will be required to undergo a criminal records background check. This will be in the form of a standard DBS check, which will be requested for each individual by the Parish Safeguarding Officer, acting on behalf of the Parish (see Section 6 below). The application for the DBS check must be submitted within 2 weeks of appointment to a position of pastoral responsibility within the parish, and checks must be renewed after 3 years. Completion and, if necessary, renewal of a DBS check will be regarded as an essential condition for continued exercise of pastoral responsibility within the Parish.

Positions or roles that are considered to involve pastoral responsibility include the following:

1. The Rector of the Parish
2. Parish clergy in major orders (bishop, priest, or deacon) and minor orders (subdeacon, reader, acolyte, and doorkeeper)
3. Catechists and teachers, including music teachers and any other activity coordinator working regularly with groups of children or adults

In the case of visiting clergy from other churches or parishes, whether joining in a regular service or else providing cover for the rector, and any visiting speaker, teacher, instructor, or activity coordinator, the requirements above will not apply. If, however, such individuals wish to continue (or for some reason do continue) their involvement in worship or other activities beyond the period of seven days, then they will be treated as parish clergy and the requirements above will apply to them.

A DBS certificate revealing convictions, arrests, cautions, &c. need not lead to automatic disqualification from holding a position of pastoral responsibility. Such cases will be reviewed and assessed on an individual basis by the Trustees, together with the Parish Safeguarding Officer, in line with the principles and requirements laid out in the Parish Safer Recruiting Policy.

9. Parish Safeguarding Officer

In adopting and ratifying this policy, the Parish of Saint Melangell commits itself to the appointment of a Parish Safeguarding Officer from among the members of the parish community. This is done in order to provide a focal point for the effective execution of those commitments outlined above. The responsibilities of the Parish Safeguarding Officer include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. To ensure that the Principles of Safeguarding outlined above are reflected in official decisions, policy documents, published educational, and other materials (as well as activities and events) of the Parish.
2. To ensure that the Code of Conduct outlined above is being followed in all Parish activities, whether conducted on or off its usual premises.
3. To assist the Trustees and Rector of the Parish in carrying out the monitoring of those who present a known risk in line with the policy described above in section 6.
4. To record all complaints of inappropriate or abusive behaviour and respond in accordance with the provisions set out in Section 7 above.
5. To ensure compliance with all commitments and obligations expressed in this document, including those relating to training and background checks for all those with pastoral responsibility as outlined in Section 8 above.

6. To attend meetings of the Parish Trustees when asked to do so, but at least once every 12 months, in order to carry out the above duties more effectively.

Any nominee for the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer must be a member of the wider Parish community in good standing, and must consent to his or her nomination. At most, three nominees may be selected by the Trustees and the appointment made by a simple majority of votes, of which one must be the Rector of the Parish. Parish Safeguarding Officers serve for a period of one year and may serve up to five consecutive terms.

10. Implementation and Review

The Parish of Saint Melangell is committed to the adoption, implementation, and review of this policy. Every member of our community must take account of this policy, which actively informs all safeguarding activity in the Parish and underpins our commitment to continuous improvement of safeguarding practice. In order to ensure that this policy is actively implemented, we undertake to carry out the following:

1. The policy is subject to annual review and any revisions must be made by Trustees within one month of appointing a new Parish Safeguarding Officer.
2. A copy of this policy must be distributed together with the Agenda for the Parish Annual General Meeting, in order to allow parish members the opportunity to suggest changes to the policy.
3. The Parish Safeguarding Officer should maintain awareness of current standards in safeguarding policy and practice, and should provide Trustees with suggested amendments to this policy whenever necessary.

11. Definitions of Terms

In this policy:

- **“Parish”** means The Parish of Saint Melangell, the entity brought into existence by decree of His Grace Bishop Gregory of Arles on 26th May 2021 and governed by the Constitution of The Parish of Saint Melangell, adopted on 17th June 2021.
- **“Members of the Parish”** means the Trustees, as defined in Clause 16 of the Constitution of The Parish of Saint Melangell.
- **“Parish community”** means the informal collection of individual persons and families who regularly take part in the worship and other activities of The Parish of Saint Melangell, or who look to the clergy of the Parish for their spiritual and sacramental needs, or who otherwise view the Parish as their spiritual home.
- **“Subject”**, as used in Section 6 of this policy means a person who presents a known safeguarding risk within the Parish community.

12. Conclusion

In summary, it is hoped that the adoption and implementation of this robust policy, as well as the development of a culture of the principles and practices that it espouses, will form the basis for ensuring that the Parish of Saint Melangell may be a place where children, young persons, and vulnerable adults, as well as all people, have the knowledge that they may seek their salvation in Jesus Christ in a place of protection and safety.