

Being a safe church:

Our culture:

As Christians and as a church, we have a commitment to learning to walk as disciples in relationship with each other and our wider community. This means caring for, protecting and coming alongside each other, and especially those who are vulnerable. Fostering a culture of care and grace, where we give away the love of Christ, as well as recognise and challenge the truth of human sinfulness, is central to who we are. It is a missional way of tending to each other, knowing we are all human but made in the image of God and living out the Gospel message. We want to be a church where all are safe and can worship and grow. We want to be a church where all can speak out in safety, knowing they will be heard.

‘We cannot have a culture that sees safeguarding as a separate add-on. It needs to be part of our DNA, as an expression of our love for one another and our commitment to the Gospel. This means not just putting in place rigorous...processes, it also means that as a church we need to understand safeguarding...as a core part of our faith and practice’. ‘Safeguarding is not primarily about ‘risk assessments’, ‘signs and symptoms of abuse’, or ‘safer recruitment’, although all those things are important. Safeguarding is primarily about the quality of our relationships with each other, and particularly about how we care for those who are vulnerable.’

Raising concerns:

‘The largest barrier that prevents people from acting on concerns is fear. Fear of ridicule, making false accusations, ‘crying wolf’ or ‘making a fuss’. We may also fear making things worse for someone who is vulnerable. If there are issues of race or culture present, we may also have a fear of seeming politically incorrect or of misusing our own power or position in the community’. We may also fear for our own safety in light of what we are saying about another.

‘Often a safeguarding concern may only present as a feeling of "that seems a bit odd?" and it can feel hard to know if that feeling should be followed up or ignored.

Sometimes we can simply convince ourselves to wait for more information or consider reporting any concerns to be someone else’s job’.

‘Responding well is not easy:

There will be many reasons why people respond inadequately. Abuse thrives in secrecy. Abusers are often very good at hiding what they do and we usually want to believe the best of people and have trust in those around us. Often, we do not want to face the reality of abuse, because doing so is painful and difficult’.

‘Safeguarding often involves dealing with uncertainty. We rarely know everything that is going on; there is often a grey area, or another explanation for something that might be worrying. When we are uncertain, and when we feel that the group to which we belong is threatened, we may find it easier to ‘explain away’ a concern. Facing the reality of what might be happening - abuse - is too difficult, so we ‘avert our gaze’ from what we ought to say, and ‘look the other way’.

But, it is the job of us all, to look out for others. In voicing your concerns, you may keep someone safe from harm – be brave and speak out, to someone on our Safeguarding Team.

What do I do if I have a concern?

1. Never promise secrecy or confidentiality – for someone’s safety, you may need to report a concern.
2. Tell the Safeguarding Officer (Rosemary Turner) or her deputy (Debbie Burke) or the Vicar (Amanda Bruce).
3. As soon as possible write down the details of the conversation you had with someone, what you noticed about them and your concern for them.