

SAFEGUARDING at HOLY TRINITY POLICY

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Haddington strives to be a safe place for all people to come and worship.

We believe that all children and adults regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse, neglect or exploitation.

We seek to ensure everyone is valued, listened to and respected.

Holy Trinity follows the guidelines of the Scottish Episcopal Church for safeguarding the welfare of our children (anyone under the age of 18) and vulnerable adults as well as the Church's procedures for good practice.(See policy below)

It is important to note that the safeguarding message is for everyone in our church.

Holy Trinity has adopted the following policy statement for Child Protection:

"The Scottish Episcopal Church recognises the special status of children and young people. Because of their vulnerability, children and young people will be awarded special protection. They are to be respected as a person in their own right, created and loved by God. We therefore, commit ourselves to take all steps within our power to keep children and young people safe from physical, sexual and emotional harm"

Holy Trinity has adopted the following policy statement for Vulnerable Adults:

"The Scottish Episcopal Church recognises the special status of all vulnerable people, particularly those who, because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness, infirmity or ageing, are unable to protect themselves from abuse, or more vulnerable to being abused than persons who are not so affected. Because of their vulnerability, such people will be awarded special protection. They are to be respected as persons in their own right, created and loved by God. We, therefore commit ourselves to take all steps within our power to keep vulnerable people safe from harm and from an abuse of trust."

What we will do to keep children and vulnerable people safe and how we will respond to concerns:

We have appointed a Protection of Vulnerable Groups Coordinator for safeguarding purposes who has been approved by the Bishop. The General Synod office and Diocesan Protection Officer are also aware of these arrangements. The Co-ordinator for Holy Trinity is:
Cindy Sykes 07971 227 426

The Scottish Episcopal Church "Code of Good Conduct" is displayed prominently on noticeboards in both the church and the church hall together with contact information for the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Coordinator, and some useful Diocesan and Provincial telephone numbers to use in the case of an emergency along with Childline and Silverline contact information.

Safeguarding is on the agenda for meetings of every Vestry meeting. The Protection of Vulnerable Groups Coordinator provides a written report for the church AGM.

If volunteers are carrying out a regulated role, as defined in the SEC Guidelines, p7/8 of PVG guidance: <https://www.scotland.anglican.org/resource/people-safeguarding-employment/safeguarding-in-the-scottish-episcopal-church/> then they are members of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups scheme. Anyone wishing to undertake a regulated role MUST be members of the PVG scheme BEFORE undertaking the role. Once in the scheme members have

to have their PVG cover reviewed every five years. It is expected that those who are working in regulated roles will attend the training of the Diocese and Province.

What to do if a disclosure is made:

If a disclosure is made to any member of the congregation then they are obliged by law to report it – either to the priest or the PVG co-ordinator. Once disclosure has been made then the Scottish Episcopal Church guidelines should be followed to handle the situation appropriately, allowing the person to speak without interruption, accepting what is said and advising the person that they must pass on this information.

The information may then be shared with the Provincial Child Protection Officer, Police Scotland and / or Social Services, as appropriate.

In the case of a child, the parent or guardian should also be notified at this stage (unless the adult in question is the parent or guardian, in which case advice is taken from PVG co-ordinator or Diocesan PVG official). This should always take place as soon as possible.

If a situation is disclosed where it is seen as an emergency, or there is a risk to further harm if the person is allowed to return to the situation, the police must be alerted on 999, and then the PVG co-ordinator and/or the priest.

We share information confidentially and accurately and keep all records in a secure place.

Specific arrangements for work with children and young people (under 18)

We recruit volunteers carefully ensuring that the necessary enhanced Protection of Vulnerable Groups scheme membership safeguarding checks are carried out. These checks would be carried out for those who work with children in any Sunday School and Crèche provision we might set up in the future (we don't have this provision at the moment).

A minimum of two adults would be in attendance at all times when children are in our Sunday School or Crèche, or other activities.

We follow the same procedures with regard to vulnerable adults. Should it come to our attention that an adult has been subjected to any form of abuse, the information will, as appropriate and necessary, be passed on to the Provincial Officer, Police Scotland and Social Services.

Useful numbers:

Provincial Head of Safeguarding: Christine Riddoch: 07881 868 387

Provincial Safeguarding Office Number: 0131 225 6357

Diocesan Safeguarding Officer: Hannah Marcus 0131 538 7044

Cindy Sykes (PVG Coordinator)

2026

SEC Safeguarding Policy Principles and Commitments

The witness of Scripture recognises and affirms God's love for all members of the human family and the priority given in Jesus' ministry to children and the vulnerable of society. His ministry was one of welcome for all. To be free to worship and participate in the life of the Church, people need to feel safe and included. Good safeguarding practice helps to ensure that everyone is welcome in a church community. Good safeguarding practice is part of how we value people, and treat them with respect.

Clergy and church workers, both paid and volunteers, undertake ministry in the church in a variety of forms including the provision of spiritual advice and support, counselling, assistance in times of need, education and activities for children and young people, and these take place in a variety of situations within a church community. In their ministry relationships clergy and church workers must act in the best interests of those to whom they minister, always recognising that anyone may be vulnerable.

The five commitments in this policy are based on the Anglican Communion Safe Church Charter which was adopted by General Synod in 2016. Each is followed by a statement of the safeguarding principles that underlie the commitment.

Full details of safeguarding governance structures, practice and procedure are contained in Canons 65 and 54 and in a range of guidance and practice notes available from the General Synod Office and the SEC website. The Provincial Officers and Provincial Safeguarding Committee are responsible for overseeing and updating guidance and practice notes in line with current best practice. A schedule of safeguarding terminology and definitions is appended to this policy.

In seeking to make the Scottish Episcopal Church a safer place for all people, we make the following commitments:

Culture of safety

1. We will promote a culture of safety in our congregations and church organisations and communities by education and training to help clergy, other church workers and participants prevent the occurrence of harm and abuse.

The church bears witness to the gospel message of salvation by its teaching and its life as a community.

Church communities seek to be like the kingdom of God, but humanity is imperfect, and people harm one another, both intentionally and unintentionally. Only in heaven will God's people be completely free and safe from harm. On Earth we need safeguards to enable the church to become more like the kingdom of God.

There are many forms of abuse, but abuse is always wrong. The harm caused by abuse can be deeply destructive and have lifelong effects. People in the church must work together to prevent abuse, seek justice when it has occurred, and care for those affected by abuse.

It is the responsibility of all who are called to positions of authority and leadership in the church to promote and exercise good safeguarding practice. In Acts 20: 28-30 Paul speaks to the elders of the church at Ephesus of their responsibilities, recognising the difficulties that lay ahead for them: 'Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son. I know that after I have gone, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Some even from your own group will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them.'

This passage speaks to the church today of the need always to be alert, and of the harm and distress caused by those who have perpetrated abuse in the church, and of those who have concealed abuse or minimised the effects of abuse.

People who are known or suspected abusers may seek to participate in the life of a church community.

They include those charged with or convicted of criminal offences involving sexual abuse. While ministry to them is encouraged, this should not compromise the safety of others, especially children, young people and vulnerable adults. Those who pose a risk to vulnerable people should not be permitted to participate in a leadership role.

Creating and maintaining a culture of safety in the church requires the involvement of all who participate in the life of church communities, not just clergy and church workers. Training to understand and prevent the occurrence of abuse should be part of the formation and ongoing development of clergy. Church workers should receive safeguarding training relevant to their area of responsibility in the church's ministry. Those charged with church governance should receive training in their responsibilities for implementing safeguarding policy. All participants in church communities should receive teaching to help them understand the principles of safeguarding and its importance to a Christian way of life.

Creating and maintaining a culture of safety in the church requires more than the adoption of rules and policies. These need to be effectively implemented, and their implementation monitored. The Anglican Communion's Safe Church Commission Guidelines to enhance the safety of all persons especially children, young people and vulnerable adults within the provinces of the Anglican Communion is based on the Safe Church Charter, and the guidelines are adopted as benchmark against which to assess implementation of the Scottish Episcopal Church's safeguarding policy on an ongoing basis.

Suitability for ministry and positions of trust

2. We will have and implement policies and procedures to assess the suitability of persons for ordination and clergy appointments, and lay appointments to positions of responsibility and trust in the church including checking their background.

Safer recruitment practice is an important means to prevent abuse in the church, as past conduct is an indicator of behaviour in both the present and the future. Assessment of clergy and church workers' suitability for ministry should include background checking. The purpose of background checking is to identify any information which indicates that the person may pose a risk to the safety of others.

Background checking involves a criminal record check where permitted or required by Government legislation. Clergy background checks require bishops to disclose ministry suitability information. In assessing suitability for training for ministry and ordination, discernment processes should include background checking.

Safer recruitment practice for lay appointments, both paid and voluntary, should include publicising the paid position or voluntary role, interviewing candidates and taking up references.

Information from background checking is taken into account in assessing whether the person is suitable to undertake a ministry role in the church.

Practice of ministry

3. We will adopt and promote by education and training standards for the practice of ministry by clergy and other church workers, whether employees or volunteers, who share in specific areas of the church's ministry.

There is an intrinsic imbalance of power in a ministry relationship between clergy and other church workers and those to whom they minister. This arises because they have spiritual authority over

others, specialised knowledge and expertise, or access to the leaders and resources of the church. It is always the responsibility of the clergy and church workers to maintain appropriate boundaries in their ministry relationships.

Clear standards for the practice of ministry should be understood and adopted by all clergy. Other church workers should be provided with a job description that sets out the responsibilities for their particular role in the church's ministry. Training on standards of behaviour helps clergy and church workers to maintain appropriate boundaries in their ministry relationships. Mentoring, supervision, peer support and ministry review are effective ways of promoting good safeguarding practice.

Effective responses to abuse

4. We will have and implement policies and procedures to respond properly to allegations of abuse against clergy and other church workers that include:

- **making known the procedure for making complaints;**
- **arranging care and advice for any person making a complaint of abuse;**
- **the impartial determination of allegations of abuse against clergy and other church workers, and assessment of their suitability for future ministry;**
- **providing support for affected congregations and church organisations.**

Transparency and openness, accountability and justice are guiding principles in responding to abuse.

Clergy and church workers have power and authority by virtue of their role in ministry and are therefore in a position of trust. Some may be unaware of their power and unconsciously exercise it in abusive ways to achieve their own desires. Others intentionally use their power to overcome the resistance of their victims. Clergy and church workers who misuse their power and authority by abusing others have betrayed the trust conferred on them and should be held accountable for their conduct.

The church has a duty to take allegations of abuse seriously, and not to minimise or cover up allegations to protect the church's reputation. Concealment of abuse is an abuse of power and is a failure to act with justice and integrity. Survivors of abuse are further harmed when the church fails to act upon their complaints.

Support where there is abuse

5. We will provide support for the abused, their families, and affected congregations and church organisations and communities by:

- **listening with patience and compassion to their experiences and concerns;**
- **offering spiritual assistance and other forms of care.**

Abuse is behaviour which causes harm to another person or is undertaken with the intention of causing harm to another person, or which may place another person at the risk of harm. Types of abuse include, but are not limited to, bullying, concealment of abuse, cyber abuse, emotional abuse, financial abuse, gender-based violence, harassment, neglect, physical abuse, racial abuse, sexual abuse and spiritual abuse.

When abuse occurs more than one form of abuse can be involved. In the church, other forms of abuse can be accompanied by spiritual abuse. Perpetrators of abuse sometimes silence their victims by misusing their spiritual authority, such as by saying that compliance with the abuse is God's will or threatening exclusion from the church if the abuse is disclosed.

Abuse often occurs and continues unimpeded because of the unequal power relationship between the abuser and their victim. People will be afraid to disclose abuse where there is a culture of silence in the community and the church. When people disclose alleged abuse, the Church should

listen without judgement, respond with compassion and maintain confidentiality, therefore church leaders and members should not make comments or express opinions on such allegations.

A variety of social and cultural factors can contribute to a person's vulnerability to abuse, such as the poverty, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, and physical or intellectual disability of the victim. Other circumstances in which a person may be vulnerable include bereavement, relationship breakdown, loss of employment and other life changing events.

People who have suffered abuse must never be pressured to forgive their abuser. Further harm can be caused through pressure to forgive. They may condemn themselves and believe they are condemned by others if they are not willing or able to forgive. They may see themselves as 'not being Christian', and beyond the forgiveness of God.

Abuse does not only affect the person who has suffered abuse. Secondary victims include families both of the victim and the alleged abuser, friends and church communities. The way in which the church cares for victims must be centred on the individual's needs. Some situations will require specialist support from outside the church.

Those who provide care to primary and secondary victims of abuse should receive relevant training.

They also require support in their ministry. It is often not realised that caring for victims can be emotionally and spiritually draining, especially where care is provided for a long period of time. Support of those providing care helps to sustain them in this ministry.

If the principles outlined in these policy commitments are followed, the Scottish Episcopal Church

will be a place of enhanced safety for everyone, where:

- **clergy and church workers act with integrity**
- **victims of abuse receive justice**
- **clergy and church workers who commit abuse are held accountable**
- **church leaders do not conceal abuse**