

Safeguarding Presentation to the Parish, 18th/19th November 2023

Sunday 19th November has been designated by the Catholic Church in the UK as Safeguarding Sunday for 2023, and it seems that this is an appropriate time to give the Parish an update. Our Safeguarding theme is: 'One Church, one day, one message.' We will be joining thousands of other churches across the UK to share this message and demonstrate unity. "Protecting vulnerable people. Together." Our church should be a place where anyone can come and feel welcomed, loved, and part of a community. But with that openness comes responsibility, especially towards safeguarding vulnerable people.

Theological background

We are invited to regard safeguarding as part of our faith in a loving and just God – the God who calls us to speak up on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves and to defend the rights of the vulnerable (Proverbs 31:8).

As church, God calls us to: protect the weak (James 1:27), speak up for those whose voices are not heard (Proverbs 31:8), follow Jesus' example of servant leadership (Luke 22:26), and pursue God's heart for justice for all (Micah 6:8). Christ revealed to his Church that God's mission is for us, as his followers, to bring healing to the broken hearted, restore justice, and offer freedom and light where there is pain and darkness. Safeguarding is part of proclaiming the Gospel, for in all our efforts to care and protect the most vulnerable we give witness to Christ.

There is simply no place for abuse in our churches.

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding involves measures to protect the health, well-being, and human rights of individuals, which allow people, especially children, young people, and vulnerable adults, to live free from abuse, harm, and neglect.

Shrewsbury Diocese and St Werburgh's Parish Chester are committed to safeguarding as an integral part of the life and ministry of the Church, and of this Parish. Every human being has a value and dignity which we, as Catholics, recognise coming directly from God who created each of us in his own image and likeness. Therefore, our parishes and communities must be safe places of welcome where we support and protect one another.

Who is involved?

Everyone in the Catholic Church has a responsibility to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of those around them and those engaging in activities provided by the Church. From this perspective, therefore, we are all involved.

To help facilitate the process, the Diocese has established a Safeguarding Office and appointed a safeguarding Coordinator, Andrew O'Brien. Andrew and his team are supported by (volunteer) Parish Safeguarding Representatives (PSRs) in each parish. For St Werburgh's, these PSRs are Liz Aeillo and Chris Proudfoot

The Diocese is responsible for:

- Safe recruitment of all volunteers in parishes, groups, and organisations. It is a part of the process that these appointments are made and approved by the Diocese.
- Managing the criminal record check process with the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS).
- Safe management of offenders living within our parish.
- Responding to allegations concerning any member of the Diocesan Catholic community.
- Providing ongoing training and resources in child and adult at risk protection.

The PSRs are the primary point of contact for any safeguarding issues past or present within the Parish and should be contacted if there are any worries or concerns, or just for more information. However, if anyone is concerned about immediate danger to a child or vulnerable adult, they should contact the police by dialling 999. The role of the Safeguarding Representatives is to make sure that the Parish is aware of safeguarding practices and to ensure that such practices are robust. If a concern is raised, we will listen and ensure that a full understanding of any situation is obtained. Our role is then to raise any concerns with the Diocese who will take on board any further investigation, if required. This is not the role of the PSR.

The PSRs are also responsible, within the Parish, for identifying volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults, and facilitating the required applications for DBS clearance.

The Parish Priest (Fr. Paul) is independent of the overall safeguarding process and there is no requirement to contact him. He will always share any safeguarding issues or concerns with the PSRs.

Further information on Diocesan safeguarding is available on the Diocesan website ([Safeguarding - Diocese \(dioceseofshrewsbury.org\)](http://Safeguarding - Diocese (dioceseofshrewsbury.org))).

Contact details for PSRs are as follows and are in the Parish Newsletter every week.

- **Liz Aiello** - tel: 07813743723
- **Chris Proudfoot** - tel: 07711495070
- **eMail** - safeguarding@stwerburghchester.co.uk

What is involved?

Parish volunteers who work with under 18's or vulnerable adults are required to be checked by the Diocese and the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA). The application for clearance is composed of a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), a government and legal requirement, alongside a separate Diocesan check which on first application includes references from two referees. DBS clearance must be renewed every 3 years. The SVP are DBS cleared alongside a separate check administered by the SVP.

What has been done?

We have been involved with training sessions organised by the Diocese and have met with Andrew O'Brien the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.

Chris has attended a Diocesan Safeguarding Mass both in 2022 and, indeed, this weekend for 2023.

In 2022/23 we met with the Parish Council and meet regularly with the Parish Priest. We have also set up a safeguarding notice board in the Church porch with contact details.

We have worked with SVP, First Holy Communion, Confirmation and Altar Servers to obtain clearance for those who required it. Our Youth Group and Parishioners who take Communion to homes are the next Groups for clearance.

We are grateful to the parishioners who have applied for clearance as they have, without exception, fully co-operated in the process, which is not difficult. We are always willing to meet with applicants to enter details on the computer or to complete forms. We are particularly pleased that Group leaders are now coming to us for Safeguarding advice without being asked. When DBS clearance is required, we recommend early involvement to avoid any delays in setting up new Groups.

External Support:

If anyone has suffered abuse, no matter how long ago, by someone in the Church or because of their relationship with the Catholic Church of England and Wales, the Church of England, or the Church in Wales, there is an organisation called Safe Spaces which can provide you with support. You do not have to have told the police or the church authorities, and you do not have to still be involved with the church.

Contact details for **Safe Spaces** are:

- tel: 0300 303 1506
- email: safespaces@victimsupport.org.uk
- website: www.safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk

What Next?

We will continue to liaise with the Parish Renewal Programme and facilitate DBS checks when required. This includes the DBS renewal process after 3 years. We are in the process of adding Safeguarding information to the Parish Website and would like to invite anyone who has any thoughts and ideas on what should be included in this to contact us. This will help ensure that everyone has access to relevant Safeguarding information.