

Benefice of Winscombe and Sandford with Churchill

Code of Safer Working Practice

All those working on behalf of the parish with children, young people and adults must:

- Treat all individuals with respect and dignity.
- Ensure that their own language, tone of voice and body language are respectful.
- Ensure that children, young people and adults know who they can talk to about a personal concern.
- 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. Sign and date the record.
- Obtain written consent for any photographs/videos to be taken, shown, displayed or stored using the Parish Photography/Video Consent Form or the Registration form for Children's Activities.
- Administer any First Aid with others around.

In addition, those working with children and young people must:

- Always aim to work with or within sight of another adult.
- Ensure another adult is informed if a child needs to be taken to the toilet. Toilet breaks should be organised for young children.
- Respond warmly to a child who needs comforting but make sure there are other adults around.
- Ensure that the child and parents are aware of any activity that requires physical contact and its nature before the activity takes place.

All those working on behalf of the parish with children, young people and adults must not:

- Invade an individual's privacy whilst washing and toileting.
- Use any form of physical punishment. • Be sexually suggestive about or to an individual.
- Scapegoat, ridicule or reject an individual or group.
- Permit abusive peer activities e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying.
- Show favouritism to any one individual or group.
- Allow an individual to involve you in excessive attention seeking.
- Allow unknown adults access to children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable. Visitors should always be accompanied by an approved person.
- Allow strangers to give children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable in the group, lifts.
- Befriend children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable on social media.
- Take photographs on personal phones or cameras as this means that images are stored on personal devices.

In addition, those working with children and young people, must not:

- Give lifts to children you are supervising, on their own or your own (unless there are exceptional circumstances e.g. in an emergency for medical reasons or where parents fail to collect a child and no other arrangements can be made to take a child home. In such situations, the circumstances and your decision must be recorded and shared with an appropriate person at the earliest opportunity).
- Smoke or drink alcohol in the presence of children and young people.
- Arrange social occasions with children and young people (other than events which also include adult family members/carers) outside organised group occasions.

Acceptable touch

Sympathetic attention, humour, encouragement and appropriate physical contact are needed by children and adults. Some physical contact with children, particularly younger children, is wholly appropriate. The following guidelines regarding touching are suggested:

- Always ask permission.
- Be mindful of your body position.
- Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be in response to a child's needs and not related to the worker's needs. It should be age appropriate, welcome and generally initiated by the child, not the church officer.
- Avoid any physical contact that is or could be construed as sexual and/or abusive/offensive.
- Allow the child to determine the degree of physical contact with others except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. when they need medical attention).

In addition:

- ✓ You can allow people you support to give you brief hugs if you feel comfortable with this.
- ✓ You can allow people you support to hold hands or link arms with you to help with travel and stability.
- ✓ You should discourage people you support from touching your face. You can offer your hand instead.
- ✓ You should discourage people you support from sitting on your lap. You can offer to sit side by side.
- ✓ You should avoid using touch if the person you support is very distressed and is unlikely to tolerate it.

Ensure that church officers at all levels must take responsibility for monitoring one another in the area of physical contact. They should be encouraged to challenge one another if necessary. Concerns about possible abuse or inappropriate behaviour should always be reported.

Guidance for those Working Alone in Church or at another Building

Lone working refers to situations where individuals, in the course of their duties, work alone or are physically isolated from colleagues and without access to immediate assistance.

- If a situation arises that you are unfamiliar with, or in which you feel unsafe, you should withdraw and seek further advice or assistance.
- You should conduct their own risk assessment on the occasions when you are working alone, which will help you to decide how safe a situation is and what action should be taken to avoid danger.
- You should be aware of your behaviour and the signals you may be giving; think about your body language, tone of voice and the choice of words you use with others that could be taken as confrontational.
- You also need to be aware of changes in the behaviour of the person you are with, especially if they seem to become angry or threatening.
- If an incident occurs – even if it is considered a minor incident – you should make the Pastoral Team Leader and/or Incumbent, and/or Parish safeguarding Officer know as soon as possible in order that the appropriate risk assessment and follow-up action can be taken.
- You should take every reasonable precaution to ensure that you do not disclose your personal details, such as address and telephone number, without good reason.

Home Visits

- When visiting a home for the first time it is advisable to work in a pair.
- Be aware of your responsibilities in ensuring your personal safety when visiting people in their own homes.
- Always ensure that someone else, i.e. either the Pastoral team Leader /or colleague/ or family member, is aware of your movements. This means providing them with the address that you are visiting, details of the person you are visiting, telephone numbers if known and expected arrival and departure times.
- You should ensure that you have access to a mobile phone at all times, which is in good working order.
- All homes visits should be recorded, as clear and detailed record keeping may prevent problems in the future.
- You should never undertake a visit to a child or young person in their home unless another adult is present.
- Be alert to any signs of potential danger during a home visit and be prepared to leave immediately if they you have any concerns. Confrontation should always be avoided, and lone workers should never assume that violence won't happen, as while there are many home visits made safely every day, personal safety is paramount. Any incidents should be reported to the Pastoral Team Leader and/or the Parish Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible.
- Staff and volunteers who undertake home visits should ask the person they are visiting if they can secure any pets they may have which may present a safety risk.
- Where possible, home visits should be conducted in the morning or early afternoon, rather than the evening or late afternoon, to avoid travelling in the dark, particularly in areas that you don't know, or may feel uncomfortable in. If this is not feasible, consideration should be given to working in pairs.

