

# Addendum to July/August 2019 MESSENGER

## Safeguarding in 2019

Most people wonder what is meant by the term Safeguarding or what a PVG Coordinator is in church? I'll try to give as simple an explanation as possible, now that I have taken over John Busby's role. Many thanks are due to John for his work over the past years and I am not going to try to fill his shoes!

What is a vulnerable person? The guidelines for the Scottish Episcopal Church state that these are "people who, because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness, infirmity or ageing, are unable to protect themselves from abuse or are more vulnerable to being abused than persons who are not so affected."

In this day and age much emphasis is placed on feeling safe in whatever circumstance we find ourselves and there is also a culture of litigation for things which we would never have believed possible just a few years ago. So as a Church we have to make sure that we provide an environment where everyone feels safe and where we reduce the difficulty of solving complaints as much as possible.

To do this there are a number of guidelines for us all to follow. First of all, the things most of us do without thinking anyway –

- 1 Treat all vulnerable adults with respect
- 2 Promote a safe environment and encourage others to follow your example
- 3 Ensure that, whenever possible, there is more than one adult present during your organisation's activities with vulnerable adults, or at least that you are within sight or hearing of other.
- 4 Respect a vulnerable person's right to personal privacy
- 5 Encourage vulnerable people to feel comfortable enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like
- 6 Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well-intentioned
- 7 Be aware that even caring physical contact with a vulnerable person may be misinterpreted
- 8 Recognise that special caution is required in moments when you are discussing sensitive issues with vulnerable adults

Now the things we should NOT do!

- 1 Have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with vulnerable people
- 2 Allow oneself to be drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour
- 3 Make suggestive/derogatory remarks or gestures in front of vulnerable people
- 4 Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- 5 Exaggerate or trivialise abuse issues
- 6 Show favouritism to any individual
- 7 Rely on your good name or that of the Church to protect you
- 8 Believe 'it could never happen to me'
- 9 Take a chance when common sense, policy and practice suggest another more prudent approach

What then is my role as a safeguarding officer? I am the person you go to when you feel that someone is at risk for whatever reason and I pass that information on firstly to the Vestry and perhaps to the Diocese for help in the situation that has arisen. All information is kept strictly confidential. I also keep records of all volunteers who work with children or vulnerable adults and help them with any disclosure checks that might be necessary. This is all up-to-date at the moment but if anyone takes on visiting duties or helping with children and adults in certain situations then I am the person to help with all the background checks that unfortunately are necessary in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I keep the Vestry informed of any problems arising in the congregation and make a report each year to the church's AGM.

All the above information is on the notice boards in church and the church hall. I can be contacted by email – [jandi21@sky.com](mailto:jandi21@sky.com) or by phone on 01436423451.

*Joan Thompson*