St Mary’s Church Bridgwater has adopted the Safeguarding Policy of the Bath and Wells Diocese, as below.

**The Parish Church of St Mary Bridgwater**

**Parish Safeguarding Policy**

The Church of England, in all aspects of its life, is committed to and will promote the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It fully accepts and endorses the Children Act 1989 & 2004 & The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

Christian communities should be places where all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse. The Church is particularly called by God to support those less powerful and those without a voice in our society. The Parish Church of St Mary Bridgwater is working towards creating a safe and non-discriminatory environment by being aware of some of the particular situations that create vulnerability. Issues which need to be considered include both the physical environment and the attitudes of workers and volunteers.

A person (adult or child) who might be considered vulnerable has the right to:

* Be treated with respect and dignity.
* Have their privacy respected.
* Be able to lead as independent a life as possible.
* Be able to choose how to lead their life.
* Have the protection of the law.
* Have their rights upheld regardless of their ethnicity, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religion or cultural background.
* Be able to use their chosen language or method of communication.
* Be heard.

In any situations where there may be a difference of opinion about priorities, the welfare of any child or vulnerable adult should be the paramount concern.

The Parish Church of St Mary Bridgwater will foster and encourage best practice within its community by setting standards for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. It will work with the Diocesan Safeguarding team, statutory bodies, voluntary agencies and other faith communities to promote the safety and well-being of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

We are committed to acting promptly whenever a concern is raised about a child, young person or vulnerable adult or about the behaviour of an adult in a position of trust, and will work with the Diocesan Team and the appropriate statutory bodies when an investigation is necessary. We are also committed to the support of those who have been abused and to listening to the voices of survivors, who can help the church learn lessons from the past.

This statement of principles applies to children, young people and adults.

We are committed to:

* The care, nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children, young people and adults
* The safeguarding and protection of all children and adults
* The establishment of a safe, caring community which provides an environment where there is a culture of informed vigilance regarding the dangers of abuse, and where victims of abuse can report or disclose abuse and find support.
* The promotion of best practice that contributes to the prevention of abuse.

The safeguarding and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults is everyone’s responsibility, not just parents or those who have formal leadership or caring responsibilities. Procedures and formal processes alone, though essential, will not protect children and adults. The community, including all its members, needs to be aware of the dangers and be prepared to report concerns and take action if necessary.

We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility for children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church in line with safer recruitment principles, including taking up references and the use of criminal records checks.

The suitability of an applicant or nominated volunteer for work with children, young people or vulnerable adult should not be solely dependent upon Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) disclosures and vetting checks. Someone whose DBS disclosure is clear may still be unsuitable. Hence the need for an interview and references to assure ourselves, as far as we can, that someone is suitable.

As part of the Safer Recruitment process, it is the policy of The Parish Church of St Mary Bridgwater that:

* All those who regularly work with children, young people and vulnerable adults including those who work on a rota, should have enhanced DBS checks if they reach the criteria;
* Those who work only occasionally will be asked to apply for a DBS check if they reach the criteria;
* Those who manage or supervise people who work with vulnerable groups will be required to be DBS plus Barred List checked if they reach the criteria.

The Parish Church of St Mary Bridgwater accepts that, through its workers and volunteers, it is responsible for children, young people and vulnerable adults when in a church building, on church property and other premises being used by the church and during church activities. Responsibility extends to travel between places, when it is organized by the church. However, a church is not responsible for private arrangements.

The term ‘complaint’ can cover an allegation, disclosure or statement, something seen or something heard. The complaint need not be made in writing but once received it must be recorded and acted upon. Complaints can be taken from alleged victims and third parties.

If a child, young person or vulnerable adult comes to notice as having suffered abuse in the past, church officers will notify the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and appropriate authorities to ensure that the matter is on record. Support will be offered to adult survivors of child abuse, who will also be encouraged to make a statement to the Police if they have not done so before.

We will seek to offer informed pastoral care and support to anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry that recognises the importance of understanding the needs of those who have been abused, including their feelings of alienation and / or isolation. We recognise that anyone can be a victim of abuse in any setting, including in their own home, and in a church environment, and will work hard to make our church a safe place for people to disclose any concerns they have and receive appropriate support. We will seek to protect survivors of abuse from the possibility of further harm and abuse.

We will seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust and responsibility, where they are trusted by others.

We will seek to offer pastoral care and support, including supervision, and referral to the appropriate authorities, to any member of our Church community known to have offended against a child, young person or adult who is vulnerable. We will support them in continuing to attend church services whilst supervising their attendance to reduce the risk of further harm.

The Parish Church of St Mary Bridgwater agrees to follow the Practice Guidance from the House of Bishops on safeguarding matters, and to adopt the Diocese of Bath and Wells Safeguarding Policies.

**Statutory definitions of abuse and neglect of Children:**

The UK central government document ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ categorises and defines abuse in terms of:

**Physical abuse** including hitting, haking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating.

**Emotional abuse** including conveying to a child that they are inadequate, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, verbal abuse, isolation, seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.
It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying).

**Sexual abuse** including assault by penetration (for example,rape
or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. It may include involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse.

**Neglect** including failure to provide adequate food,clothing and shelter, to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, to provide adequate supervision and/or access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

**Domestic abuse** Witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse, and teenagers can suffer domestic abuse in their relationships.

**Sexual exploitation** Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. Children or young people may be tricked into believing they are in a loving, consensual relationship. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol. They may also be groomed and exploited online. Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

**Bullying and cyberbullying** Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else – such as name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening or undermining someone. It can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It is usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally. Bullying that happens online, using social networks, games and mobile phones, is often called cyberbullying. A child can feel like there is no escape because it can happen wherever they are, at any time of day or night.

**Online abuse** With the ever-growing use of the internet, mobile telephones and online gaming (e.g. Xbox/ PlayStation), there has been a corresponding rise in the use of the internet and other electronic communication to target, groom and abuse children. Adults may target chat rooms, social networking sites, messaging services, mobile phones, online gaming sites and the internet generally. Children are particularly vulnerable to abuse by adults who pretend to be children of similar ages when online and who try to obtain images or engineer meetings.

**Electronic images** The downloading, keeping or distributing of indecent images of children are all classified as sexual offences. Such offences are sometimes referred to as non-contact sexual offences. However, it must be remembered that children will have been abused in the making of the images. The texting of sexual messages and photographs (sometimes referred to as ‘sexting)

**Statutory Definitions of adult abuse**

The UK central government document ‘Care and Support Statutory Guidance’ categorises and defines adult abuse in terms of:

**Physical abuse** including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.

**Sexual abuse** including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented or could not consent or was pressurised into consenting.

**Psychological abuse** including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.

**Financial or material abuse** including theft,fraud,exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

**Neglect or acts of omission** including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

**Discriminatory abuse** including racist, sexist, based on a person’s disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

**Domestic abuse** that is usually asystematic, repeated and escalating pattern of behaviour, by which the abuser seeks to control, limit and humiliate, often behind closed doors.

**Organisational abuse** including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home. This may range from one-off incidents to ongoing ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

**Modern slavery** including human trafficking; forcedlabour and domestic servitude; and traffickers and slave masters using whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment

There are people within the church who take responsibility for keeping our congregation safe, and their details are listed below:

Our Churchwardens are **Richard Philpott** and **Richard Smith**

**Vicar:** Revd. Suse Osmond 07934804889

**Our Parish Safeguarding Officer - Vicky Gould**

**saintmarybridgwater@gmail.com** **/ 01278 424972**

**The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser** - Ben Goodhind

07834 514842 / email ben.goodhind@bathwells.anglican.org

This policy is reviewed annually.

Signed: S.Osmond 19th January 2023