



ST NICK'S CHURCH

Safeguarding for small group leaders

Key information

Safeguarding is an important aspect of all ministry at St Nick's and is the responsibility of everyone, whether you are leading groups of adults, young people or children. As small group leaders, you may encounter vulnerable adults or issues of current or historical abuse raised by adult group members.

Appropriate response to issues of both current and historical abuse is vital, for the protection of the individual and for others who may be impacted.

We're conscious that abuse, whether recent or historical, is sensitive and pastorally challenging. If you have any personal concerns, please seek support by speaking to your SLOB leader.

Please refer to this leaflet as necessary during the year. More information on supporting vulnerable adults can be found in the St Nick's Safeguarding Policy (electronic copies of these documents available via mikey@snca.co.uk).

Thank you for helping us to serve the church family in this way.

What is abuse and what is historical abuse?

Abuse

The Department of Health states that ‘somebody may abuse or neglect an individual by inflicting harm, or failing to act to prevent harm. Individuals may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.’ Abuse can be described under any one of (or a combination of) these categories:

- *Physical abuse*
- *Sexual abuse*
- *Psychological abuse*
- *Financial & material abuse*
- *Domestic abuse*
- *Discriminatory abuse*
- *Neglect & Acts of omission*
- *Self neglect*

More information on areas of abuse and how to recognise signs of abuse can be found in the St Nick’s Safeguarding Policy.

Historical abuse is any allegation or disclosure of abuse committed in the past against a child or young person who is now an adult.

If anyone reports any of the above abuse to you, whether recent or historical, and whether they were the abused or the abuser, you must follow the action points on the next page.

Remember:

- Historical abuse must be treated as seriously as recent abuse
- ‘Children and young people’ means anyone aged under 18
- Illegal activity includes sex with someone aged under 16, child pornography and sharing explicit images of children
- The Church is required to take advice from the Diocese and may need to report allegations or disclosures of criminal acts to the Police

When someone tells you they have been abused, or have committed abuse, whether recently or many years ago

General points:

- Above all else, listen
- Keep calm, and show understanding/acceptance of what is said, however unlikely it seems. Reassure the individual that they were right to tell you
- Never push for information. Avoid leading questions and ask only what is necessary to ensure a clear understanding of what has been said
- Let the individual know what you are going to do next and that you will keep them informed. Let them know that you will need to tell someone else - don't promise confidentiality
- However, do reassure them that you will only tell who you need to, and that they will remain involved in decisions going forward

Action you must then take:

- You must contact the Minister, Chris Fishlock, and tell them what you know (you do not need to disclose any names at this stage unless told otherwise).
- If the allegation is against the Minister, contact the Church Safeguarding Officer (CSO) - contact details can be found on the back page of this document.
- You retain the right to report serious matters directly to Social Services or the police. Even so, as soon as possible (and within 24 hours), you must also contact either the Minister or the CSO.
- Apart from telling the Minister/CSO, the information must be treated as confidential and not shared with co-leaders, SLOB leaders or other church members. Under no circumstances should you investigate concerns of abuse yourself – your role is to pass on the information you've received.
- Make notes as soon as possible (preferably within one hour, but always within 24 hours), writing down exactly what was said and when, what you said in reply and what was happening immediately beforehand (e.g. a description of the activity/situation). Record dates and times of these events, and of when you made the record. Keep all hand-written notes, even if subsequently typed. Such records should be kept for an indefinite period in a secure place. A copy of these notes must be passed onto the Minister.
- The Minister/CSO will let you know if you need to do anything else. They are available to answer any questions/concerns that you or the individual involved may have at any stage
- Consider your own feelings and ask the Minister for pastoral support if needed, and consider with the Minister what pastoral support is needed for the individual involved

Key Contacts

Key Contacts

- **The Minister:** Chris Fishlock
chris@snca.co.uk, 07782 315 549

- **SNCA Safeguarding Officer (CSO):** Edward Crossley
E.Crossley@4stonebuildings.com, 07711 937 674

- **Church Evidence Checker:** Mikey Williams
mike@snca.co.uk, 07837 068 532

- If you have experienced abuse yourself, the issues raised by this document may be particularly sensitive. If you would like pastoral support, please approach your SLOB leader. We recognise this may be a very difficult thing to do, especially if you have not told anyone before, but we are eager to provide appropriate pastoral support.
- If you have committed abuse or any related form of criminal act in the past, we would encourage you to be open about it with the Minister, however difficult that may be.
- A disclosure of recent or historical abuse might have been made to you in a context outside St Nick's, for example on a summer camp. If you did not report the matter at the time, we encourage you to do so now, however much time has passed. If you are in any doubt, please raise the matter with the Minister.
- If for any reason you feel unable to approach the Minister, please approach your SLOB leader or the CSO in the first instance and seek advice. In the interests of maintaining appropriate confidentiality, we would encourage you to do this only as a last resort and without (at least in the first instance) disclosing the names of those to whom your concern relates.