

ST MARY'S CHURCH WOODBRIDGE

TALK TO CONGREGATION ON SAFEGUARDING SUNDAY 17/11/2024

Good morning. I am Jeremy Hawksley and am Safeguarding Officer for St Mary's. Barbara Stear, who used to be Churchwarden, is Deputy SO. TODAY is Safeguarding Sunday.

First, I need to say something about the events of this last week. I refer to the publication of the Makin Review about the long-term abuse of boys and young men by John Smyth at Christian meetings approved of by the C of E; the subsequent cover up of these activities by the Church authorities; and the recent (unprecedented) resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury because of this. These events have shocked us all. I hope it has illustrated why the safeguarding procedures that the C of E has introduced over the last 20 years are so important, and why we, as Church members, need to take safeguarding seriously.

For some of us the subject matter of the Makin Review may have been personally painful, triggering memories of abuse to you, or to others close to you. If this is the case, please speak to Barbara or me and we can direct you to people who can help. We will be at the back of the Church after the service.

What are the Church's safeguarding procedures, and what you need to do:

- It is a Legal requirement of the C of E that all church volunteers do at least "basic awareness" safeguarding training. It is our duty as Church members. Others with more responsibility have to do more training (e.g. Member of the PCC have to do the Domestic Abuse Unit).
- Mostly this training is on-line through the Church of England's website and each unit takes about an hour.
- What is a possible "safeguarding concern"? This is a situation when someone you are with through a church activity, tells you of a matter that involves the emotional, physical, sexual or financial abuse of a person under 18 (children or teenagers) OR of a "vulnerable adult".
- A "vulnerable adult" is someone who may lack a physical or mental ability or who may be very old. Abuse in this category normally means that the abuser is in some way more able than the person being abused e.g. in better health / having much more physical and mental ability.

- It is important to understand that the two responsibilities of all volunteers for any activity related to the Church are:
 - 1) Do the training; 2) Report any Safeguarding concerns you might have to Barbara or myself.

Remember that even small concerns may be of interest, as they could add something to a bigger picture about a situation that has already been noted.

- Our role as Safeguarding Officers is to take concerns seriously, to write a factual note about them and forward this to Karen Galloway, the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer. She will advise what, if any, action should be taken. For serious matters she will become involved herself.
- We will then feed back to the person who raised the concern.

I am asking you all today to do the Basic Awareness safeguarding training if you have not done so already. It must be repeated every 3 years, so if you have done nothing since November 2021, you need to do the training again. Then just tell me the date you completed the training.

I have been pestering volunteers about this since 2022. But even so we have only around 70% of St Mary's volunteers who have done the required training. So, we need to do better. I will be writing to volunteer group leaders over the next couple of weeks asking them to ensure that, in their group, everyone's training is up to date. The PCC discussed this on Tuesday and fully support this action.

Finally, to answer an obvious question you might have: *"Why should I, as a mere volunteer once a month, be trained about safeguarding?"* Two points: -

- You are a volunteer for the Church. You will meet people in a random way – in the shop / as a flower arranger / as a welcomer / training a new bell ringer or choir member. People can tell you things that make you uneasy. You need to be able to understand when such disclosures are possible safeguarding concerns. Training tells you about this.
- People telling you uncomfortable things can be distressing. You need to know what you should do about such disclosures – which is to talk to the Safeguarding Officer immediately. This helps you as a volunteer.

Thank you. I will be at the back of the Church now if you want to talk to me.

END: JH/Safeguarding/Talk on 17th November +PCC.doc 16/11/24 (5 Mins. Approx.)