



Merton Priory Parish Safeguarding Update April 2020

Currently all seems fairly quiet on the church safeguarding front, however, that doesn't mean that it is no longer relevant. Whilst we are no longer meeting in person as a congregation or holding group activities, we are still a church community and need to look after our most vulnerable members.

Lockdown means different things to different people and affects everyone differently: Some people might find that they enjoy the escape from the busyness of regular life; or relish extra time spent with family or pets. Others might struggle with solitude or have problems getting food & medicines. Some might experience an increase in domestic violence. Many children and adults are now in lockdown with their abuser. People with mental health problems who have developed coping strategies for their usual lifestyle might now find themselves in crisis.

I read a Twitter post that described "a crisis within a crisis". Whilst the coronavirus pandemic is undoubtedly the over-riding crisis, there is an emerging mental health and welfare crisis. Financial problems are also adding to stresses and anxieties.

We need to endeavour to be aware of members of our congregations and local communities who are experiencing immense loneliness; at risk of abuse; struggling to cope and lacking support. Whilst obviously vulnerable people have been identified, there will be others who need support but are not immediately obvious.

The diocese recently sent out a newsletter from the CofE's national safeguarding team which included specific information regarding Covid-19 and is worth reading.

Meanwhile, the Church of England's past cases review into sexual abuse is still in progress. Mark and Alison reported back to the diocese about relevant cases. Incidents that weren't dealt with at the time are very much of importance and should be reported either via the diocesan safeguarding team or through the NSPCC's dedicated helpline (this is for adults or children and is for church specific cases): 0800 80 20 20.

Recruitment and DBS checks need to continue in accordance with our existing procedures. However, at the moment we can do ID checks using scanned documents or via video link (the actual document will need to be produced when the individual's work begins).

Life is somewhat hectic for me at the moment but please email me if anyone has any safeguarding concerns or questions. Dee Thiruchelvam has also been appointed as a PSO (subject to the necessary safeguarding checks). However, as a Director of Nursing, she is at the forefront of the NHS's implementation of procedures to contain and deal with Covid-19. Please remember Dee and her colleagues in your prayers.

Liz Tackley (Parish Safeguarding Officer)