Compliance with CofE Safer Environments and Activities with regard to Appropriate Boundaries

Whilst much of this document focuses on very practical topics, we begin our thinking about safe practice by looking at some of the underlying aspects, in particular with regards to our relationships within church. Much of our safeguarding practice in church is built upon how we relate to each other, expressing and demonstrating the love of God in every aspect of our relationships and valuing the image of God in each person. In this regard, safeguarding is a core Christian activity: The core of safeguarding relies on an understanding of the dynamics of power and vulnerability in relationships. This is not specialist activity that is only undertaken by those with qualifications in the safeguarding field. To practise safely, ministers and others engaged in pastoral work, community work or counselling need to reflect on these issues and their boundaries in these relationships...The evidence from secular organisations working in the social welfare field is that good safeguarding...is an indicator of good practice in other areas. It is hard to think of reasons why this would be different in the Church, which may overuse the phrase 'watching over one another in love' without thinking through what this means in practice

1.1. Positions of Responsibility.

1.1.1. What is a Position of Responsibility? A person is in a position of responsibility if they have a role that gives them authority over others. They will be expected to use that authority for the benefit of those they are responsible for, not to take advantage of or exploit them. Examples of church officer roles which are regarded as 'Positions of Responsibility' are listed below. (Please note this list is not exhaustive and there may be other roles which should/would be regarded as Positions of Responsibility).

• Clergy

• Licensed and Authorised Lay ministers e.g. Readers

• Worship Leaders • Safeguarding Officers / Advisers

• Youth Leaders and workers (and leaders of Parent & Toddler Groups)

• Churchwardens

• Children's leaders and workers

• Music/Choir leaders

• Leaders of groups for adults who may be vulnerable e.g. elderly, adults with mental health issues, refugees, the homeless • Parish volunteer drivers – who drive vulnerable groups (children and/or vulnerable adults)

• Bell ringers who teach or train young people and Tower Captains

• Lay people authorised to provide pastoral care – For instance, this will include Pastoral home visitors, Authorised Listeners, Pastoral Outreach workers

1.1.2. The perception of others. The above list suggests some of the 'typical' roles which would be defined as 'positions of responsibility'. However, it is important to remember that to visitors – and especially to children – almost any role within church conveys a level of trustworthiness and respectability. All those who are involved in church life must consider how they relate to others and, in particular, to those who are vulnerable

1.1.3. Why is this important? All relationships in church should be characterised by generosity, care and kindness. Particular care should be taken when that relationship involves a level of responsibility for or authority over others. That responsibility and authority must be exercised in a trustworthy way, acknowledging the power and influence that can be exerted, perhaps even inadvertently, over others. Thinking about power and influence, which we do briefly below, is at the heart of what safeguarding is about.

1.1.4. Power in relationships. The relationship between a person in a position of responsibility in church and those they minister to is one of power or influence. The relationship is not between equals. Particular care must be exercised, meaning that those in positions of responsibility must: • Be aware of the power and influence they have and use it in ways that respect and empower others; • Recognise that power and influence can act in subtle and quite covert ways, and are not just limited to more obviously domineering leadership styles. • Maintain clear boundaries in relationships, avoiding using their role to establish relationships of inappropriate intimacy or dependency with those for whom they have responsibility; • Not use their power to abuse, exploit, bully, intimidate, coerce or undermine.

Someone seeking assistance may be distressed, sad, confused or frightened, adding to their vulnerability. This makes it even more important that those responding to them are aware of their status and power. Relationships can become blurred, dependant or exploitative in such situations if boundaries are not maintained. This is all the more the case in church, where our relationships may be less formal than other settings. In certain settings such as teaching, it is a criminal offence to engage in sexual activity with students even when that student is over the age of consent (i.e. when they are 16 years old or over). The legal term for these roles is Position of Trust. The guidance you are reading now uses 'positions of responsibility' rather than 'Positions of Trust' to avoid confusion with the recognised legal term, but the underlying principles are similar. The law regarding Positions of Trust does not currently apply in faith settings, for instance with youth leaders, clergy, choir leaders etc.3 However, the firm position in this guidance is that sexual activity between an adult and a 16 or 17 year-old child, when that adult is in a position of responsibility in a church setting as defined above, is a breach of that

position and will be treated as a serious safeguarding situation. If the adult in question is ordained, such a breach would lead to a complaint under the Clergy Discipline Measure. 3 The Church of England is supporting a call for the law regarding Positions of Trust to be extended to clergy and others exercising authority in a church setting

Section 3 Working with Vulnerable Adults

The guidance below relates to work in church with adults who are defined as 'vulnerable adults'. However, some of the principles and guidance offered here relates to all aspects of pastoral ministry in the church.

3.1. Basic Principles. Adults who are vulnerable are a valued and valuable part of church life, and should be able to engage in active membership of church communities. Churches should focus not just on the needs these adults have, but also - and indeed primarily - on the abilities and gifts they bring and how they can contribute to the life and fellowship of the church. With this in mind, churches should: • Create an environment where all people, including those who are vulnerable, are encouraged to participate in and contribute to all aspects of church life; • Consider how church activities, including public worship, promote and enable the inclusion of vulnerable adults; • Adopt and publish policies and procedures for the safeguarding of vulnerable adults; • Work with all adults, especially those who have specific vulnerabilities or who are at particular risk, in ways that empower them to be in control of their own lives and make their own decisions. The underlying principle of the 2014 Care Act, for instance, has been summarised neatly in the phrase: "No decision about me, without me".

Section 3.2 Home Visiting (please see Home visiting in Lone Working Document as it is exactly the same)

Section 4.4 Social Media – Maintain appropriate boundaries in the online world: Just as in the offline world, it is important to keep a distinction between our private lives and our work within church, and to pay particular attention to the dynamics of power and influence.

Holy Trinity, Hartshill PCC agree to comply with the Church of England Safer Environments and Activities **Appropriate Boundaries** guidelines

Signed ..... D. Miles .....

Date..... 2/11/2026 .....