**St Mary’s Silverstream welfare of Children Policy**

**Introduction**

The Anglican Dioceses of New Zealand believe that we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults, and to keep them safe. We are committed to ensuring they are protected within our organisation from all forms of abuse. The Church is called by God to love, to stand alongside and advocate for those at the margins, those less powerful, and those without a voice in our society.

Christian communities within the Anglican Dioceses of New Zealand should be places where all people feel welcomed, respected and safe. In such communities, every human being has infinite worth and unique value as a child of God. Partnering with children, young people and their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people’s welfare.

**Purpose**

***Why do we have a child protection policy?***

It is both a legal requirement and our responsibility as loving Christian communities, to ensure the safety of our young people, our vulnerable adults and our stipendiary or employed ministry leaders, and our volunteers.

This policy affirms that this parish (St Mary’s Silverstream) is committed to ensuring our communities of faith are safe and life giving for all people. At all times, best practice will be adhered to, to ensure the safety of all children, young people and vulnerable adults.

**Scope**

***Who does this policy apply to and where does it apply?***

This policy is for every person regularly assisting in a ministry for children, young people and/or vulnerable adults, in this parish (St Mary’s Silverstream). This includes all clergy, lay, paid and/or volunteer leaders.

**Related policies and legislation**

This policy acknowledges the following legislation:

* Treaty of Waitangi, 1840
* Children, Young Person and their Families Act, 1989
* United Nations Rights of a Child, 1989
* Domestic Violence Act, 1995
* Vulnerable Children’s Act, 2014

**Responsibility and Review**

The Vulnerable Children’s Act requires organisations to ensure that those working with children understand the nature of abuse and neglect.

All churches must now also develop policy for:

* Defining and Identifying Abuse and Neglect
* Dealing with Disclosures of Abuse
* Recording, Reporting and Responding to Suspected Abuse

All (stipendiary, employed and volunteer) ministry personnel must have a thorough understanding of this policy and be seen to be practising this policy.

Other resources on best practice are available upon request, such as guidelines for social media, travel, food and hygiene.

This policy should be reviewed following any significant event.

**Training**

We acknowledge that there are a variety of leadership levels and roles, and the training required will depend on their level of responsibility.

**All leaders**

Every person regularly assisting in a ministry for children, young people and/or vulnerable adults, must have completed a Safety Check (refreshed every three years) (see page 5) and to attend were reasonably practical Safety and Boundaries and Protection and Abuse courses.

The Safety Check is the required minimum level for someone to be “cleared” for working with children, adolescents or vulnerable adults unsupervised, and be recognised as a team member.

**Planning and Leading a programme**

Every person responsible for planning an event/activity/programme, is also to have completed one additional safety-training module called a Risk Management and Incidents course.

It is a requirement to have immediate access to an up-to-date first aid kit, a mobile phone, and all relevant telephone numbers (e.g. emergency services, nearest medical centre).

**Use of Helpers**

It is understood that for practical purposes it will be necessary from to have help from other people to fill in for absentees at late notice, or to provide extra assistance in the crèche on a busy day, for example. These people will be working either in the presence, or under the direct supervision, of Team Leaders and they will not be expected to have undergone the above training, or have passed a Safety Check (p.5).

However, if such people become regular helpers for any activity, and/or their task involves them being unsupervised for any period of time, the Safety Check procedures must be followed and the other training mentioned above as reasonably practical.

**The Safety Check**

All aspects of the Safety Check must be completed before any person may commence ministry. Keep a secure record of the Safety Check in a separate file for each applicant.

**The Safety Check process for Voluntary personnel**

For voluntary personnel it is recommended that there be a 6 months minimum period of attendance in the congregation, prior to applying for any leadership or ministry role. All applicants must undergo a complete Safety Check, which includes:

1. Identity verification.
2. Consideration by the leadership as to suitability including a conversation.
3. New Zealand Police Vetting (Vetting type is for a Non-Core Worker)
4. International Police Certificate, if they do not hold New Zealand residency.
5. Evaluation and Risk Assessment

If the volunteer has a regular ministry (other than merely incidental contact with young people or vulnerable adults) it is recommended that they have an agreed Covenant.

**The Safety Check is to be refreshed every three years**

For all personnel the Safety Check to be refreshed every three years. This requirement to recheck runs from the date the last Safety Check was completed.

When updating a Safety Check every three years the following checks are required:

1. Confirmation of any changes of officially recorded name
2. A fresh New Zealand Police vet, and
3. A fresh Evaluation and Risk Assessment

It is also recommended practice to recheck previous personnel if there has been a significant period of absence.

**Defining and Identifying Abuse and Neglect**

The Children, Young Persons and their Families Act, 1989, defines child abuse as “…the harming (whether physically, emotionally, sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation of any child or young person”.

It is not always easy to recognise that a child is being hurt or is at risk, so abuse is often undetected. There are indicators (signs, symptoms or clues) that when found, either on their own or in various combinations, can point to possible abuse, neglect or family violence.

**Dealing with Disclosures of Abuse**

Any issues of suspected child abuse must be taken seriously and handled in an appropriate manner that ensures the child’s safety.

We should never deal with issues of abuse on our own and should always involve our leadership as soon as possible.

**Guidelines for safe handling of disclosure**

There are a number of basic guidelines that should be followed to ensure the safe handling of any disclosures of abuse from a child:

* Don’t panic.
* Believe children when they talk with you.
* Look at the child directly, try not to appear shocked.
* Listen to what is being said and accept what they say.
* Stay with the child if they become upset and until they have said all that they wish to say.
* Don’t seek help while the child is talking to you.
* Reassure them that they did the right thing by telling someone.
* Assure them that it is not their fault and you will do your best to help.
* Involve your Team Leader as soon as there is a disclosure or even suspicion of abuse.
* Let the child/victim know that you need to tell someone else.
* Let child/victim know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens
* Be aware that the child may have been threatened.
* Documenting, as soon as possible, what was said and what you have done as a result.
* Write down what the child has said in their own words.
* Record what you have seen and heard.
* Make certain you distinguish between what the child has actually said and the inferences you may have made. Accuracy is paramount in this stage of the procedure.
* Remember that the safety and well-being of the child come before the interests of any other person.

The same action should be taken if the allegation is about abuse that has taken place in the past. It will be important to find out if the person is still working with or has access to children.

**Recording, Reporting and Responding to Suspected Abuse**

We must act in their best interests and take all reasonable steps to ensure their safety. Our legal obligations vary according to differing legislation, but our moral responsibility is to report suspected or disclosed child abuse.

This will involve making an oral and written report to the leadership.

It is the responsibility of the leadership to take any action and to ensure that the correct procedure for recording and responding to concerns is followed.

Child Abuse is best dealt with by specialist Police Officers who work alongside Oranga Tamariki to investigate concerns of abuse. Early intervention by child protection services reduces harm to victims before the abuse has the opportunity to escalate. It is not our role to prove that abuse or neglect is happening. Our obligation is to ensure that we have formed a belief that based on reasonable grounds and is held in good faith. Our report may add to information that the child protection services already have received from other sources.

Reports of abuse and/or neglect must be notified as soon as practicable so that an early assessment of the child’s safety can be made.

It is always preferable that the parent/caregiver is involved and or informed of any concerns but the leaderships first priority will always be ensuring the safety of the child, and this may require the leadership to immediately contact Oranga Tamariki or Police if they have concerns about the child’s immediate safety.