

## **ST THOMAS THE APOSTLE CHURCH, NEW GROOMBRIDGE**

### **Behaviour Code for those people working with Vulnerable Adults**

This Code outlines the expectations of the Parish Church of St Thomas, Groombridge for all those who work or volunteer with adults. It reflects our desire to follow Jesus in all we do, reflecting his love to those we minister to. It follows from our determination to ensure that *our church* is a place where vulnerable adults can not only be safe, but feel safe. It reflects our unwavering commitment to the highest possible standards of safeguarding practice.

A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 or over whose ability to protect himself or herself from violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation is significantly impaired through physical or mental disability or illness, old age, emotional fragility or distress or otherwise; and for that purpose, the reference to being impaired is to being temporarily or indefinitely impaired.

Although everyone is vulnerable in some ways and at certain times, some people, by reason of their physical or social circumstances, have higher levels of vulnerability than others. Some of the factors which increase vulnerability are:

- A sensory or physical disability or impairment
- A learning disability
- A physical illness
- Mental ill health (including dementia), chronic or acute
- An addiction to alcohol or drugs
- The failing faculties in old age
- A permanent or temporary reduction in physical, mental or emotional capacity brought about by life events, for example bereavement or previous abuse or trauma.

Following this code will help to protect vulnerable adults from abuse and inappropriate behaviour from other adults. It will also help staff and volunteers maintain the standards of behaviour expected of them and will reduce the possibility of unfounded allegations of abuse being made against them.

### **Upholding the Code**

All members of staff and volunteers are expected to report breaches of this code to Beverley Hollands (Parish Safeguarding Officer) Fr Nicholas Henshall (Vicar) under the parish whistle-blowing procedure, or, if necessary, under the parish safeguarding policy.

Staff and volunteers who breach this code of behaviour may be subject to disciplinary procedures or asked to leave their role. Serious breaches may also result in a referral being made to a statutory agency such as the police or the local authority children's social care department.

### **Responsibility of Staff and Volunteers**

When working with vulnerable adults for St Thomas Church, Groombridge, all staff and volunteers are acting in a position of trust. It is important that all staff and volunteers are aware that they may be seen as role models by these adults. They therefore must act in an appropriate manner at all times.

When working with vulnerable adults, it is important to:

- Treat them with respect and dignity.
- Ensure that your own language, tone of voice and body language is respectful.
- Protect his or her individuality – e.g. always use their name.
- Value their contribution and take their views seriously.
- Encourage them to participate in and contribute to all aspects of church life.
- Respect their right to personal privacy.
- Ensure that they know who they can talk to if they need to speak to someone about a personal concern.
- Provide a warm, nurturing environment for vulnerable adults whilst avoiding any inappropriate behaviour.
- Ask about personal preferences, forms of address, how much help may be needed.
- Give vulnerable adults a choice about where they sit, and what activities they participate in, recognizing that some people find making choices stressful.
- Share information appropriately.

These recommendations apply to all church activities with adults who may be vulnerable – for instance, during worship on Sunday mornings, on outings, in groups and when visiting at home. They are designed to protect the adults who may be vulnerable in our care.

They apply as much to church ‘in house’ activities for regular attendees as to activities which are run in and for the local community.

Activities set up specifically for adults known to be vulnerable will need planning and preparation of a kind not needed for activities open to all. Ensure there are supervision arrangements as necessary.

28<sup>th</sup> April 2026

To be revised annually by PCC.

Review Date; April 2027