

KEY NOTE SPEECH

By the Lord Mayor of Leeds



"As parents, we know that raising a child is one of the greatest responsibilities that we hold, but safeguarding them goes beyond the walls of our homes.

It takes an entire community, and like an African proverb says, 'It takes a village.'

Faith communities, schools, neighborhoods, and social groups have an essential role to play when it comes to raising our children.

It is this shared responsibility that strengthens the fabric of our society, building a Leeds where children are safe to grow, learn, and to dream. That is one of our visions as a city.

Faith communities, in particular, are invaluable in nurturing moral grounds, and when they unite with families and civic institutions like ourselves, our collective strengths ensure that NO child is left unsupported.

I urge all of us today to reflect on how we, as individuals and as communities, can support each other in this journey.

Can we open more spaces for conversations with our children?

Can we engage organizations with diverse resources to create that family support and well-being?

The Leeds that I know—I have lived here for over 25 years now—has a remarkable history of resilience and inclusivity. At the same time, there are areas of exclusion too. By continuing to hold the values that are dear to us when it comes to raising our children, we can offer them the safety and opportunities they deserve.

Together, let's ensure that each child in Leeds feels the warmth of a community that cares deeply for them—a community that nurtures their potential and protects their well-being.

So to each and every one of you here today, we all have a responsibility to safeguard and care for our children.

This is not just a GOAL for us; we want this to be our LEGACY—one that will ripple through generations to come."

Thank you

Councillor Abigail Marshall Katung

Lord Mayor of Leeds

What steps can **Faith Leaders** take to create a safer environment where individuals feel supported and can report any form of abuse **without fear**?

- **Educate Children About Abuse:** Teach children to understand what constitutes abuse, empowering them to identify inappropriate behavior and seek help when needed.
- **Foster an Inclusive Environment:** Create a culture where children feel nurtured, valued, and empowered to speak out without fear of judgment or retaliation.
- **Supportive Space for Parents:** Establish an environment where parents can report concerns confidently, knowing they will be supported without fear of repercussions or stigma.
- **Implement a Clear Reporting System:** Develop and communicate a straightforward process for reporting abuse, ensuring confidentiality and prompt action.
- **Raise Safeguarding Awareness & trainings:** Conduct regular workshops, training, and awareness campaigns to educate the community about safeguarding responsibilities and practices.
- **Promote Safeguarding Protocols Visibly:** Use noticeboards or digital platforms to display safeguarding policies, contact information for safeguarding leads, and clear steps for reporting concerns.
- **Develop a Strong Safeguarding Team:** Appoint dedicated safeguarding leads who are trained and accessible to handle concerns and inquiries.
- **Establish Partnerships with Experts:** Collaborate with local safeguarding organizations, such as social services or voluntary action groups, to ensure best practices and access to external resources.
- **Create Safe Physical Spaces:** Design environments where children and vulnerable individuals feel secure and free from harm, including appropriate supervision during activities.
- **Encourage Open Dialogue:** Promote a culture of transparency where individuals feel heard and their concerns are taken seriously.
- **Regularly Review Safeguarding Policies:** Update safeguarding protocols periodically to align with new legislation, guidance, or community needs.
- **Offer Anonymous Reporting Options:** Provide mechanisms for individuals to report abuse anonymously to increase confidence in coming forward.
- **Build Trust Within the Community:** Consistently demonstrate commitment to safeguarding through visible actions and accountability.

Online Abuse

What steps can **parents** take to create a safer online environment

- **Enable Parental Controls on Devices:** Set up filters and restrictions on gadgets and online platforms to block inappropriate content and monitor online activity.
- **Limit Screen Time:** Establish boundaries on the amount of time children spend online to reduce exposure to potential risks.
- **Stay Informed About Technology:** Parents should become technology-savvy, staying updated on apps, websites, and platforms their children use.
- **Educate Yourself and Your Children:** Learn about online risks like grooming and sextortion, and educate children on recognizing unsafe behaviors and interactions.
- **Question Unfamiliar Items:** Be vigilant about what your child brings home (e.g., gifts or gadgets) that may indicate grooming or inappropriate relationships.
- **Be Open and Approachable:** Maintain honest and non-judgmental communication with your children so they feel comfortable sharing concerns.
- **Discuss Boundaries and Consent:** Teach children about personal boundaries and the importance of saying "no" to unwanted advances.
- **Monitor Social Media Use:** Know who your child interacts with online and ensure their social media accounts are private and secure.
- **Encourage Critical Thinking:** Teach children to question online content, avoid sharing personal information, and not trust strangers online.
- **Set Rules for Online Engagement:** Establish clear rules about online behavior, including not meeting online acquaintances in person without adult supervision.
- **Be Vigilant About Sudden Behavioral Changes:** Watch for signs of distress or secrecy that might indicate they are experiencing online abuse or grooming.
- **Engage in Regular Discussions:** Have ongoing conversations about their online activities, friendships, and experiences to stay informed.
- **Report Suspicious Activity:** Know how to report grooming or abuse to appropriate authorities or platforms and teach your children how to do the same.