

What to do if a vulnerable adult is being abused

1. Things to remember if you suspect or are told that a vulnerable adult is being abused

- Under no circumstances should you do anything that might be construed as an investigation of the allegation. This may contaminate evidence if a formal investigation were to be made.
- You must never assume that somebody else will recognise and report what you have seen or heard.
- It can be difficult if the allegation is about a colleague or friend or it is difficult to believe what you have heard, but you should never dismiss a report of abuse.

2. If someone says they have been abused:

- Listen very carefully and give them your full attention
- If the person is in immediate danger, call the police or ambulance
- Do not agree to keep it a secret; you cannot do this. Explain to them you have to pass it on
- Reassure them you will deal with the allegation discreetly and will take it seriously
- Avoid asking questions about the alleged abuse
- Don't make judgements
- Do not confront the alleged abuser
- Report the allegation to the parish lead person or the incumbent
- Write down what you have been told for future reference
- Keep evidence, do not clear it away
- Remember that many vulnerable people rely on their carers for support and shelter, so the reporting of mistreatment needs to be undertaken with sensitivity.
- Talk to either i) a member of clergy
 - ii) or the Benefice lead person on safeguarding vulnerable adults who may be able to help clarify the issues
- Or you can always refer the incident to the Bishop's Adviser for Adult Safeguarding and Child Protection for information and advice

3. Useful contact numbers:

Judith Knight Diocesan HR Manager

& Safeguarding Adviser, Church House

01452 835526

The Adult Helpdesk at Gloucestershire County Council

01452 426868

Rape Crisis

01452 526770

Samaritans

01242 515777

Healthwatch, Gloucester

01452 504989

Safeguarding Children Services Mon - Fri 9am - 5pm

01452 583638

Police Child Protection Unit (24 hours)

01242 261112

01242 276086

Rev'd Charles Thomas

01242 890636

Many circumstances can make adults become vulnerable and at these times individuals often turn to the Church for support. It is important for the Church to consciously support vulnerable people.

The following pages are available to help individuals and parishes to support vulnerable adults, regardless of their situation. Parishes and individuals should read and understand the policy on the protection of vulnerable adults and use this guide to implement the policy.

If there are any areas that are not clear or if a parish needs support in interpreting and/or implementing the policy, they should contact Judith Knight the Diocesan Human Resources Manager and Safeguarding Adviser at Church House on 01452 835526.

The Bishop's Council of the Diocese of Gloucester adopts the following policy

1. Each parish is asked to make arrangements for one or more 'lead people' to be able to assist in the implementation of the policy. There are three tasks:

- i) Advocacy with regard to the concerns and views of those who are vulnerable.
- ii) Checking that the PCC policy for safeguarding adults is being followed in a coordinated way through the activities of the church.
- iii) Listening to any concerns about care raised by adults who are vulnerable.

2. The Bishop's Council will identify and appoint a diocesan 'lead person' (Bishop's Adviser for Safeguarding Adults) who will be responsible for:

- overseeing training for staff and volunteers
- advising parishes with regard to policy, procedures and good practice
- advising on whether a referral to statutory bodies is appropriate

3. The diocese will follow the proposals in Promoting a Safe Church with regard to seeking Criminal Records Bureau disclosures for its officers and for those in parishes.

i) CRB enhanced disclosures will continue to be sought for lead people, lay people and all those formally commissioned by the Bishop or authorised by the parish for pastoral and community work.

4. Training will be provided through the Ministries Forum for all staff and volunteers who work with vulnerable adults.

5. The Bishop's Council accepts the policy advocated in Promoting a Safe Church with regard to handling allegations of abuse.

6. Recognising the sensitive nature of information held in regard to adults who are vulnerable, all information will be treated with appropriate sensitivity and confidentiality.

7. The Bishop's Council will monitor its policy annually through the Bishop's Protection Management Group and any proposed changes will be brought to the Bishop's Council for decision.

Guidelines for those in positions of trust or exercising pastoral ministry with vulnerable people

Many dioceses have produced helpful guidance on the professional conduct of clergy and lay people. The Convocations of York and Canterbury have also produced Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy.

All those involved in pastoral ministry, whether paid or unpaid, clergy or lay, should be working within this or a similar set of guidelines. Following such guidelines should not only protect vulnerable people but also ensure that workers are not wrongly accused of abuse or misconduct.

Pastoral relationships

Exercising any kind of ministry involves workers developing an understanding of themselves and how they relate to others, how they increase the well-being of others and how they ensure their own well-being and safety. People in positions of trust inevitably have power, although this may not be apparent to them. Therefore, respecting professional boundaries is particularly important. Many pastoral relationships can become intertwined with friendships and social contacts making this guidance even more necessary.

- Church workers should exercise particular care when ministering to persons with whom they have a close personal friendship or family relationship
- Church workers should be aware of the dangers of dependency in pastoral and professional relationships and seek advice or supervision when these concerns arise.
- Church workers who exercise a healing ministry should be trained in the theology and non-intrusive practice of that work.
- Church workers should recognise their limits and not undertake any ministry that is beyond their competence or role (e.g. therapeutic counselling, deliverance ministry, counselling victims of abuse and domestic violence, or their perpetrators or giving legal advice). In these cases, the person should be referred to another person or agency with appropriate expertise.

Conversations and interviews in a ministry context

Formal interviews and informal conversations in a ministry context are pastoral encounters. Church workers should be aware of their language and behaviour, for example, innuendoes or compliments of a sexual nature are always inappropriate. When a person asks questions or seeks advice around topics of a sexual nature, the worker should be discerning about the motives and needs of the person and question their own ability to assist.

The church worker should consider in advance:

- the place of the meeting, arrangement of the furniture and lighting, the worker's dress;
- the balance of privacy for conversation with the opportunity for supervision (open doors or windows in doors, another person nearby);
- the physical distance between people. The appropriate distance should be determined by a balance of hospitality and respect and an awareness that someone may have suffered abuse or harassment in the past;
- whether the circumstances suggest a professional or social interaction;
- the propriety or danger of visiting or being visited alone, especially in the evening;
- the personal safety and comfort of all participants;
- establishing at the outset the nature of the interview in respect to subject matter, confidentiality and duration;
- the appropriateness of initiating or receiving any physical contact, for example gestures of comfort, which may be unwanted or misinterpreted.

Record keeping and privacy

Church workers should consider keeping a daily record of pastoral encounters including the date, time, place, subject and actions to be taken. The content of any encounter should only be recorded with the person's consent unless it is a matter of child protection or might record a suspicion of abuse or mistreatment

- Any record should be factual and avoid rumour or opinion.
- Records concerned with abuse should be kept indefinitely (at least 50 years).
- The publishing, sharing or keeping of personal data or images should follow the appropriate legislation.

Working with colleagues

The standards maintained within a pastoral relationship are equally relevant in relationships with colleagues. Harassment or bullying should never be condoned. All workers need to be aware of the possibility of stress within the work place. The needs of family should be acknowledged and all who work together should acknowledge the boundaries between work and home, allowing sufficient time for relaxation and holidays. Everyone who works with vulnerable people should know to whom they are accountable and have a designated person with whom to discuss their work.

- Church workers should be aware of the responsibilities, function and style of other church workers and should encourage cooperation and consultation between workers in their tasks.
- Colleagues should not be discriminated against, harassed, bullied or abused for any reason.
- Colleagues should not be penalised for following this guidance or for taking action regarding others and this guidance.
- When leaving office or relinquishing any task, church workers should relinquish any pastoral relationship except with the agreement of any successor.
- Church workers should know to whom they are accountable and be regularly mentored by them or another person who can assist. Such mentoring is especially necessary for those undertaking a continuing individual pastoral ministry of counselling, or when their ministry takes them outside normal church work.
- Church workers should ensure that their tasks can be carried out by another if they are ill or otherwise unable to fulfil their responsibilities.

Sexual conduct

The sexual conduct of church workers may have an impact on their ministry within the Church. It is never appropriate for workers to take advantage of their role and engage in sexual activity with anyone with whom they have a pastoral relationship. Workers should be aware of the power imbalance inherent in pastoral relationships.

- Church workers must not sexually abuse an adult or a child.
- Church workers must take responsibility for their words and actions if wishing to make physical contact with another adult (e.g. a hug may be misunderstood) or wishing to talk to them about sexual matters. This will include seeking permission, respecting the person's wishes, noticing and responding to non-verbal communication and refraining from such conduct if in doubt about the person's wishes.
- Church workers should follow the Church's discipline on sexual matters.
- Church workers must not view, possess or distribute sexual images of children and should refrain from viewing, possessing or distributing sexually exploitative images of adults.
- Church workers should avoid situations where they feel vulnerable to temptation or where their conduct may be misinterpreted.

Financial integrity

Financial dealings can have an impact on the church and the community and must always be handled with integrity. Those with authority for such matters should maintain proper systems and not delegate that responsibility to anyone else.

- Church workers should not seek personal financial gain from their position beyond their salary or recognised allowances.
- Church workers should not be influenced by offers of money.
- Church workers should ensure that church and personal finances are kept apart and should avoid any conflict of interest.
- Money received by the church should be handed by two unrelated lay people.
- Any gifts received should be disclosed to a supervisor or colleague who should decide whether the gift should be accepted.
- Care should be taken not to canvass for church donations from those who may be vulnerable e.g. the recently bereaved.

Behaviour outside work and Christian ministry

In church ministry behaviour outside work can often impinge on that ministry. Church workers are expected to uphold Christian values throughout their lives.