

Guidelines for Working with Vulnerable Adults at Christ Church, Abingdon, Northcourt Road and Long Furlong

Version 1e, May 2017

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For the purposes of this document, a working definition for “Vulnerable Adults” is:

**A vulnerable adult is any adult aged 18 or over who, by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation, is permanently or for the time being, unable to take care of him or herself, or to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.**

*(Taken from Promoting a Safe Church: Policy for Safeguarding Adults in the Church of England Pub 2006.)  
(A fuller definition, taken from the Diocese of Oxford Guidelines, is on Page 4 of this document.)*

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The following is to be read, understood and ‘owned’ by clergy, pastoral workers, members of the Church Council, and all those involved in leading and helping, on a regular basis, work with vulnerable adults.

Christ Church, as part of the Church of England, is committed to:

- The care, nurture of and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children and adults
- The safeguarding and protection of all children, young people, and adults when they are vulnerable
- The establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is a culture of ‘informed vigilance’ as to the dangers of abuse

‘Protecting All God’s Children’, 2010 House of Bishops’ Policy for Safeguarding Children

These Guidelines encourage good practice as they recognise the responsibility of care that we have as a church towards others and will help us work towards preventing the abuse of vulnerable adults while they are in our care. They also protect those who work with vulnerable people from unfounded accusations or from behaving in ways that may be well-intentioned but inadvisable. These Guidelines do not attempt to be comprehensive. For further information please read the **Sources** below.

Responsibility for implementing these Guidelines rests with the Church Council, who have appointed a Parish Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Representative to oversee compliance and implementation. The Council can be legally liable if the duty of care is neglected. The Church Council takes responsibility for those who work with vulnerable adults, including appointment and support, and requires those involved in such work to follow the guidelines attached.

The Guidelines are divided into 3 areas:

- **Safe recruitment principles**
- **Guidelines for safer working practice**
- **What to do in suspected or disclosed cases of abuse**

SOURCES

The following publications are all available online – contact the Parish Safeguarding Representative if you need help locating them.

Protecting All God’s Children, House of Bishops, 4th Edition 2010

Safeguarding Guidelines relating to Safer Recruitment, House of Bishops, Oct 2010

Promoting a Safe Church: Policy for Safeguarding Adults in the Church of England Pub 2006

Safeguarding Handbook for the protection of children and vulnerable adults, Diocese of Oxford Mar 2012

SAFER RECRUITMENT PRINCIPLES

All volunteers and paid staff are appointed under the same procedure.

All those who work/wish to work with vulnerable adults will be interviewed (informally for volunteers) and must:

- Fill in an application form and provide names of two referees
Applicants will be asked about previous experience, but lack of experience will not be a bar to the role.
- Complete a Confidential Declaration
- Complete an enhanced DBS disclosure
*An enhanced DBS Disclosure previously issued through another organisation (e.g. workplace) may be acceptable subject to certain conditions, but must have been obtained for working with vulnerable adults.
All convictions (for example, offences such as drink-driving) are relevant and must be declared, however old. They will not automatically be a bar to the role.*
- Receive a copy of these guidelines, a volunteer agreement and a letter of appointment.
*This will outline what you have been asked to do, and the person you report to.
It also asks you to read these guidelines and agree to keep them.*

These documents will be kept confidentially.

The church will continue to guide and support people appointed to both paid and voluntary posts.

Outside groups using the premises

Anyone from outside Christ Church invited to be involved with our pastoral work is required to comply with these Guidelines. People using our premises for work with vulnerable adults will be shown a summary of these Guidelines and asked to abide by them. A copy of the full Guidelines is also available to them.

GUIDELINES FOR SAFER WORKING PRACTICE

Remember these are not exhaustive guidelines. Further information can be found in 'Promoting a Safe Church: Policy for safeguarding adults in the Church of England' and from the Coordinator of Pastoral Care.

- Team working is an important part of working with vulnerable adults. It is important for all volunteers and paid staff to meet together regularly in their groups to review their work and pray about the people in their care. All groups will have a leader or coordinator.
- We are committed to respectful pastoral ministry to all adults within our church community.
- We are committed, within our church community, to the safeguarding and protection of vulnerable people.
- We will carefully select and train all those with any pastoral responsibility within the Church, including the use of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) disclosures where legal or appropriate.
- We will respond without delay to any complaint made that an adult for whom we were responsible has been harmed, cooperating with police and the local authority in any investigation.
- We will seek to offer informed pastoral care to anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate healing ministry.
- We will challenge any abuse of power by anyone in a position of trust.
- We will care for and supervise any member of our church community known to have offended against a vulnerable person.

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 necessarily 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 recognize 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 such instances the person should be referred to another person or agency with appropriate expertise.
- Church workers should avoid behaviour that could give the impression of inappropriate favouritism or the encouragement of inappropriate special relationships.
- Church workers should treat those with whom they minister or visit with respect, encouraging self-determination, independence and choice.
- Care should be taken when helping with physical needs, washing and toileting, always respecting the choices of the individual concerned.
- Pastoral relationships may develop into romantic attachments and such situations should be handled sensitively. Workers need to recognize such a development and make it clear to both the person concerned and a supervisor or colleague. Alternative arrangements should be made for the ongoing pastoral care of the person concerned.
- Church workers should not undertake any pastoral ministry while they are under the influence of drink or non-prescribed drugs.

(Taken from Promoting a Safe Church: Policy for Safeguarding Adults in the Church of England Pub 2006)

WHAT TO DO IN SUSPECTED OR DISCLOSED CASES OF ABUSE OF VULNERABLE ADULTS

Responding to observed or alleged suspected abuse, and disclosures by those who have experienced misuse of power, abuse or harassment

Any abuse of a vulnerable adult, whether physical (including domestic), sexual, psychological, financial or material, modern slavery, discriminatory, organisational, neglect and acts of omission, and self neglect should in the first instance, be reported to the team leader and the co-ordinator of pastoral care. If the abuse is current, further action may be required, including reporting to the appropriate authorities and, if necessary, the police. (See below 'If abuse is discovered.')

After experiencing abuse, at some time during the healing process, many people will want to consider further action beyond personal acceptance of what has happened. Such action may involve deciding to tell a trusted friend, partner, parent or perhaps a member of the clergy. However, some people have been further hurt when the friend, relative or church worker has not been able to cope with the disclosure and has responded inappropriately. Seeking some kind of therapeutic help may be an option and it may be that, within such help or in discussions with friends, consideration is given to what else needs to be done.

Abuse, which thrives on secrecy, loses some of its power to harm when this secrecy is broken. Nevertheless, whom to tell, when, and for what purpose, needs careful thought. Being able to talk to a close friend or relative, who is able to hear, support and care, is for many people the most useful help in healing. For some this trusted relationship is with a counsellor, clergy person or other professional.

At some point in the personal healing journey many survivors consider what they should do about the abuser. Some may wish to confront the abuser either personally or by letter. For others, this is impossible, but they still may wish to ensure that the abuser is not in a position to harm others.

One of the consequences of speaking to others about the abuse is that they may have a responsibility to act.

- A family member may need to be sure that others in the family are safe.
- A friend may be aware that the abuser is involved with children or vulnerable people and be concerned for them.
- Organizations that work with children or vulnerable people will have policies with procedures that need to be followed if someone in the organization becomes aware of allegations of abuse.

For some it will be important that the person is brought to account for their actions through the criminal justice system and, if a criminal act has been committed, this may be a necessary action that the church must take in order to protect others. Following an investigation, the alleged abuser may be charged and taken to court. It takes a lot of courage to give evidence in court and to accept the decision of the jury. Nevertheless many people feel relieved, whatever the outcome, that they have done their best and spoken out in public.

If the alleged abuse has taken place within the church the survivor may wish to make this known to someone in authority and this should be facilitated even in cases where a formal complaint is not made. If a formal complaint is made, written statements will be required. If the case comes to a tribunal, evidence may need to be given in person. It is important that the survivor is supported throughout this process: deciding what to do, making the formal complaint and giving evidence if necessary.
(Taken from *Promoting a Safe Church: Policy for Safeguarding Adults in the Church of England* Pub 2006)

If abuse is disclosed or discovered (or if you have concerns you want to talk through with someone):

- Do not delay - ***if you believe a person to be in obvious danger contact the police on 999 or 101***
- Report to your team leader or the coordinator of pastoral care (or the Diocese for cases involving church staff – see below)
- Get some advice and support for yourself. Even though you should not share specific details, the following people from Christ Church are available to help you:
 - **Ros Steel** Coordinator of Pastoral Care (01235) 539172
 - **Roland Knight** Parish Safeguarding Representative (01235) 412944, 07969 808776

Additional services or advice is also available from:

- **Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor** John Nixson 01865 208290 or 208257, John.Nixson@oxford.anglican.org or safeguarding@oxford.anglican.org
- **Oxfordshire Social & Community Services** 0345 050 7666
Social Services will sensitively talk to the person about what has happened and ask them what they would like to happen.
- **Thames Valley Police** 101 (non-emergency)

The Diocese of Oxford gives this definition of “Vulnerable Adults”

A vulnerable adult is defined as a person who is aged 18 years or older and:

- *is living in residential accommodation, such as a care home or a residential special school*
- *is living in sheltered housing;*
- *is receiving domiciliary care in his or her own home;*
- *is receiving any form of health care (for example from a medical practitioner GP or Dentist, but only at the point when they are receiving such care);*
- *is detained in a prison, remand centre, young offender institution, secure training centre or attendance centre or under the powers of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;*
- *is in contact with probation services;*
- *is receiving a welfare service of a description to be prescribed in regulations;*
- *is receiving a service or participating in an activity which is specifically targeted at people with age-related needs, disabilities or prescribed physical or mental health conditions or expectant or nursing mothers living in residential care (age-related needs includes needs associated with frailty, illness, disability or mental capacity);*
- *is receiving direct payments from a local authority/HSS body in lieu of social care services;*
- *requires assistance in the conduct of his or her own affairs.*