

Safeguarding: Principles and Good Practice

1. Theological approach¹

Every human being has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of male and female in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. Amongst other things this implies a duty to value all people as filled with the Holy Spirit and therefore to protect them from harm. Christ saw children as demonstrating a full and intimate relationship with God and gave them status, time and respect, (*PaGC* section 1.2). The church is called to be a community that gives witness to the love of God by valuing and protecting the most vulnerable, especially children.

A Christian approach to child and adult protection will therefore ask both individuals and communities to create a safe environment for children and adults, to act promptly on any complaints made or concerns noted, to care for those who have been abused in the past and to minister appropriately to those who have abused.

The church must take seriously both human propensities to evil but also the God-given resources of goodness (*PaGC* section 1.2).

2. Abuse

a) Introduction

Those who need safeguarding by the Community are: children and young people², vulnerable adults³ and Community Officers.

b) Children and Young People

A child or young person (under 18 years of age) is deemed by definition as being in need of protection because of their age.

¹ *Protecting All God's Children (PaGC)* – Church of England 2010
Promoting a Safe Church – Church of England 2006

² **Young people/person** – means any individual(s) aged 14 to 17 years old

³ **Vulnerable adult** – Section 6 of the *Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016* defines a 'vulnerable adult' as '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.'

Child abuse is found in all parts of society – in all classes, cultures and religions, and amongst children of all ages. Children with disabilities or those from ethnic minorities or those who are seen or feel themselves to be ‘different’ or ‘apart’ in some way may be especially vulnerable. In the main abuse is perpetrated by an adult who is well known to the child, often a family member. Such trusted adults can also include others in the child’s community, including professionals, leaders or members of a child’s church. Some child abuse is perpetrated by other more powerful children. Children are also vulnerable to abuse through the misuse of technology via the internet and widespread images of child abuse.

Children are significantly affected by all abuse – there is no hierarchy of abuse. All abusive experiences affect children and prevent them ‘from achieving their full potential and undermines their dignity and their rights. The harm it causes will affect children whilst it is happening and in later life. When abuse occurs within the context of the church or by a Christian it may affect the person’s faith and spiritual development’ (PaGC A2.1). Abuse can never be justified and the child is never to blame.

c) **Adults**

The following are factors which may put an adult at risk of neglect and/or abuse:

- Age
- Physical illness
- Mental illness (with or without a diagnosis)
- Physical disability
- Learning difficulty or disability
- Dependency on substances or alcohol
- An offender
- A victim of human trafficking
- A victim of an assault
- Bereavement/relationship breakdown
- Being unemployed, in hospital, in prison, homeless
- Being a stranger, refugee, asylum seeker
- In relationship with someone in a position of trust
- A victim of harassment and/or bullying
- A survivor of past abuse
- Sexual exploitation
- Modern slavery

We may find ourselves working with vulnerable adults in our

ministry, both within and outside our houses. Our own members, including those on Leave of Absence and those living with the Community in its houses, guests, volunteers and employees may also be vulnerable in some of these ways, and so our policies apply also to our life in Community. We all may find ourselves vulnerable at times.

d) **Community Officers**

The factors that might make a Minister, Novice Guardian, Guardian or other Community Officer-holder, vulnerable in their role are:

- False allegations
- Harassment and bullying
- Stalking
- Transfer of power: carer/rescuer becoming the victim
- Being misunderstood
- Breaching confidentiality

e) **Definitions of abuse**

Abuse concerns the misuse or manipulation of power, control or authority by apparently trusted people. It is also important to note that sometimes signs of abuse can be extremely subtle and minimal.

Sometimes our ideas of abuse can be restricted by definitions, or we may become confused if a concern or complaint does not 'fit'. These categories of abuse can be used as a useful indicator:

• **Physical abuse**

For children and young people, 'it may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child'.⁴

For adults, it is the non-accidental infliction of physical force, which results in pain, injury or impairment.

• **Sexual abuse**

For children and young people, 'it involves forcing or enticing them to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (e.g. rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside

⁴ *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, HM Government, London, Stationery Office, 2015

of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children'.⁵

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of sexual abuse that involves the manipulation and/or coercion of young people under the age of 18 into sexual activity in exchange for things such as money, gifts, accommodation, affection or status. The manipulation or 'grooming' process involves befriending children, gaining their trust, and often feeding them drugs and alcohol, sometimes over a long period of time, before the abuse begins. The abusive relationship between victim and perpetrator involves an imbalance of power which limits the victim's options. It is a form of abuse which is often misunderstood by victims and outsiders as consensual. Although it is true that the victim can be tricked into believing they are in a loving relationship, no child under the age of 18 can ever consent to being abused or exploited.

For adults, it is the involvement of a vulnerable adult in sexual activities or relationships, without informed or valid consent.

- **Emotional/psychological abuse**

For children and young people, it is 'the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of

⁵ *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, HM Government, London, Stationery Office, 2015

children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone'.⁶

For adults, it is behaviour that has a harmful effect on a vulnerable adult's emotional health and development. All abuse of vulnerable people has an emotional impact.

- **Neglect**

For children and young people, it is 'the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs'.⁷

For adults, it is the repeated withholding of adequate care which results in the vulnerable adult's basic needs not being met. It can be intentional or unintentional and includes acts of omission.

- **Spiritual abuse**

For children, young people and adults, it is the inappropriate use of religious belief or practice by: the misuse of the authority of leadership or penitential discipline; oppressive teaching; obtrusive or forced healing deliverance ministries or rituals; the denial of the right to faith or the opportunity to grow in the knowledge and love of God.

- **Financial or Material abuse**

For adults, this is the denial of access of the individual to money, property, possessions, valuables or inheritance, or improper or unauthorised use of funds via omission, exploitation or extortion through threats.

- **Discriminatory abuse**

- **For adults**, this includes racist and sexist abuse, and exists when values, beliefs or culture result in the misuse of power that denies opportunities to some individuals or groups;

⁶ *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, HM Government, London, Stationery Office, 2015

⁷ *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, HM Government, London, Stationery Office, 2015

- **Institutional abuse –**

For adults, this occurs when an organisation’s priorities, policies and practices are more important than individuals’ needs and wishes. It includes a failure to ensure that the necessary standards are in place to protect adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect and maintain good standards of care according to individual choice.

Clearly it is not the responsibility of the Community to diagnose abuse, and sometimes abuse covers several or even all of these categories.

3. Procedures when abuse is suspected

a) Children, Young People and Adults

All allegations of actual harm, must be acted on immediately. If you are concerned or have a sense of unease about any behaviour toward a child or vulnerable adult, or if a child or vulnerable adult tells you that they, or someone they know, is being abused do take your concerns and the concerns of the child or adult experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect seriously. It is important that all concerns are shared. ‘If in doubt it is always better to make a referral to social services rather than to do nothing’ (PaGC PI.1). Silence does not protect the victims; it perpetuates victimization. Be prepared to think the unthinkable even if the person about whom the allegation is made is known to you very well.

- **Do listen carefully**, rather than directly question him/her;
- **Do accept what is said** – children rarely tell lies about being abused;
- **Do take the abuse seriously** (no incident of abuse is ever insignificant);
- **Do reassure the child or vulnerable adult**, who has spoken to you, that they have done the right thing in bringing it to your attention;
- **Do write down** exactly what was said, including any inappropriate language that might have been used, whilst it is still fresh in your mind, making a note of the timing, setting and people present;
- **Do explain to the child or vulnerable adult** what actions you are going to take – that the information must be shared;
- **Do report what you have heard, seen or suspect**, to your House Safeguarding Person who must inform the Community Designated Safeguarding Person as soon as possible. The DSP

must contact the Southwark DSA (who may also inform Social Services, the police or NSPCC) and keep the Safeguarding sub-Committee informed;

- **Do not dismiss your concerns** – the Community will take them seriously;
 - **Do not approach the person about whom you have concerns**, instead seek advice from either the Southwark Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, your local Social Service department, the police or the NSPCC;
 - **Do not confront** the alleged abuser;
 - **Do not ask questions** to obtain further information – children or vulnerable adults will only want to tell their story once;
 - **Do not promise confidentiality**, or make promises to the child or vulnerable adult that you cannot keep;
 - **Do not stop** a child or vulnerable adult who is freely recalling what has happened. If they are interrupted at this stage, they may not continue and might not let you, or anyone else know what has happened.
- b) If someone discloses to you that they are involved in abuse, or involved in children’s activities that they feel uncomfortable about:
- **Accept** what the person says to you;
 - **Take what is said seriously** (no incident of abuse is ever insignificant);
 - **Write down** exactly what you have heard;
 - **Remember all allegations of harm to children and vulnerable adults must be acted upon;**
 - **Report this disclosure** to your House Safeguarding Person who must inform the Community Designated Safeguarding Person as soon as possible. The DSP must contact the Southwark DSA (who may also inform Social Services, the police or NSPCC) and keep the Safeguarding sub-Committee informed;
 - **Confession**
It is possible that relevant information may be disclosed in a one-to-one confession made to a priest in the context of the sacramental ministry of reconciliation. Canon law constrains a priest from disclosing details of any crime or offence which is revealed in the course of formal confession.
Confession needs to be differentiated from a general pastoral conversation or a meeting for spiritual direction. Any disclosure relating to abuse made outside the context of sacramental confession must be reported.

4. Issues of confidentiality

The degree of confidentiality will be governed by the need to protect the child or vulnerable adult. Total confidentiality will not be maintained if the withholding of information will prejudice the welfare of the child or adult experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect.

The welfare of the child or vulnerable adult will be of paramount consideration in all proceedings concerning the suspicion of, or actual, abuse.

No individual within the Community involved in the disclosure of the abuse of children or vulnerable adults, need or should act alone – they are part of a vital network that includes the Southwark Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and the Bishop's child protection group. Information must be shared immediately with either the statutory authorities and/or the Southwark Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

The sharing of suspicions with anyone else risks forewarning the abuser, may put the child or vulnerable adult at further risk, and might spread rumours and innuendos that could be false and adversely affect all involved.

5. Good practice and guidelines for working with children and young people

- a) Good practice protects both children and the adults working with them. It is important that there are enough adults to provide the appropriate level of supervision

The basic procedures directly concerned with child protection issues are that you ensure that a minimum of two leaders/volunteers is always present.

Avoid potentially 'dangerous' situations where one adult and one child are left together.

Increase the leader/child ratio appropriately when away from the normal setting. Leaders/volunteers of the same gender as the children/young people need to be present, especially with older children and young people.

There must be access to a phone on the premises. This could be a mobile phone.

Ensure there is adequate insurance cover and that parental/guardian consent has been obtained for activities away from the normal meeting place. Ensure that any premises used are safe and well maintained and that a 'first aid' kit is available. Accidents should be recorded with a note of any action taken. The leader involved should sign the entry. No medication should be administered without written parental consent.

'Policies of insurance require the insured to take all reasonable steps

to prevent injury, loss or damage occurring. A duty therefore exists upon the insured to research and adopt best practice based upon current and ongoing guidelines' (*PaGC* appendix 7).

b) Touching

A child who is never touched is also an abused child. Clearly there are times when physical contact is appropriate and where declining such appropriate comfort and reassurance can, in turn, become abusive. Such touching should meet the child's needs, not the adults, should be age appropriate and suitable for the relationship.

Touching should be initiated by the child, not the adult.

Safeguards would include that all activities with children should be kept public with other adults aware of what is happening and where (in other words no hugs behind closed doors). Any inappropriate touching by the child should be noted and reported to the Southwark Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser. Adults should monitor each other's activities over 'touching'. Resorting to smacking or rough handling a child is never allowed.

6. Good Practice and Guidelines for those working and or living with vulnerable adults.

All vulnerable adults have a right to:

- a) be treated with dignity and respect;
- b) privacy – to be free from unwanted intrusion into their lives and affairs;
- c) lead an independent life, that may include a degree of risk;
- d) be able to choose how to lead their life;
- e) be included; this includes questions of physical access, provision of materials in forms which they can use, and in general enabling all people to play an active part within the limits of their abilities and strengths.

7. Disclosures of abuse from adults (*PaGC* P1.2)

If an adult speaks about concerns for a child who is not part of the church community, they should be supported to make a referral to social services, the police or the NSPCC.

If an adult speaks of concerns regarding a child or the behaviour of an adult within the church community the appropriate Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser must be informed and referral made to the social services, the police or the NSPCC

'Adults do need to be made aware, however, that if the alleged abuser is still working with or caring for children a referral to the social services will be made by the person hearing the complaint or the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser who must be informed' (*PaGC* 1.3).

There is no single correct procedure for dealing with a disclosure by an adult of abuse that took place when they were a child but there are

pastoral care considerations. The wishes of the person disclosing abuse will be very important. For some 'just being able to talk to a trusted person about their experiences can be a powerful healing event. The pastoral care of the person who has been abused is a priority' (*PaGC* extracts P1.3), and she or he may benefit from counselling and support. Such needs are often best met outside the church and advice could be given by a Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser about local organisations and individuals that can help.

8. Forgiveness

The pressure in the Church community for the victim to forgive the abuser is strong and not at all helpful. We do not have the right to demand that someone else forgives someone who has hurt them. Forgiveness comes as a gift if it comes at all and it is often the last step in the long process of healing.

9. The clear message from the Church to those who are victims of abuse and those who are survivors of past abuse needs to be: 'You are not to blame – this is not your fault'.
10. This *Policy* will be reviewed, together with all Safeguarding Policies, each year at the Joint Meeting of the Provincial Chapters.