



# Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

## Diocesan Policy

July 2007  
Reviewed 2009

future  
faithful



## Policy

The Diocese of Bradford recognises the right of all people to live their lives in freedom and dignity, free from any type of abuse or coercion. The Church is required by God to foster relationships of the highest integrity, truthfulness and trustworthiness. The Diocese accepts that it has a responsibility to ensure the safety and well being of those vulnerable adults with whom it has contact, but as a Church we must recognise that no one is invulnerable, and even those who consider themselves strong, may become vulnerable when circumstances change. Those in the Diocese of Bradford who have positions which bring them into contact with vulnerable adults must use their power with sensitivity and integrity.

For the purposes of this policy a vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 or over who has a condition of the following type: (See Appendix 1 for full definition)

- A substantial learning or physical disability.
- A physical or mental illness or disorder including an addiction to alcohol or drugs.
- A significant reduction in physical or mental capacity resulting in the need for the involvement of a secular agency.

The Diocese affirms that these people have the right:

- To live in a safe, secure, stable and loving environment
- To be protected from all forms of harm, including neglect, abuse and exploitation.
- To be listened to and heard.
- To have their religion, cultural and racial background and experience valued and respected.

- To be considered as individuals with particular needs.
- To be given opportunity to function at their full potential.

The Diocese affirms that clergy, staff and volunteers who have contact with vulnerable adults have the responsibility:

- To ensure that their actions do not violate the individual's human and civil rights.
- To work in a way which will help to prevent abuse.
- To ensure that appropriate action is taken to safeguard those where abuse is suspected.

The Diocese will:

- Encourage the careful selection, monitoring and regular review of clergy, lay staff and volunteers working with vulnerable adults.
- Report any allegations of abuse against vulnerable adults, whether or not involving clergy, staff or volunteers, immediately to the Statutory Authorities.
- Require organisations that use church premises to agree to these practices.
- Provide training to support those working with vulnerable adults.

*In order to fulfil these commitments the Diocese will make all parishes within the Diocese aware of this Policy and associated procedures, and will request each parish to adopt and implement them. The Diocese will take reasonable steps to ensure parishes do so.*

# **Guidelines**

## **Introduction**

The list below of various forms of abuse that vulnerable adults may be subjected to is given not because members of the church are likely perpetrate abuse but so that abuse might be recognised if it is happening to members of the church. Thus abuse might come to light during a pastoral visit or when home communion is taken to an elderly person.

The majority of people who are experiencing abuse of any kind will also be experiencing emotional abuse. In general, an abusive relationship includes the misuse of power by one person over another. Examples might be the elderly person who is slapped because of their incontinence or is deprived of medication as a punishment for a perceived misdemeanour. The intellectually challenged person might be cheated financially or be deprived of liberties because of a misguided assessment of their abilities.

## **Emotional Abuse**

This includes such actions as intimidation and threats, humiliation, racial or homophobic abuse, harassment, coercion and extortion. The individual may be isolated from other people and information by the abuser.

Signs of abuse may include low self-esteem, lack of confidence, increased levels of confusion and increased incontinence. The ability to communicate may deteriorate and there may be abnormal submission or resistance shown towards the perpetrator.

## **Physical Abuse**

This may include being hit, slapped, pushed, pinched, shaken and suffocated. It may involve inappropriate restraint, abuse of medication, deprivation of physical aids and neglect of personal care, food, drink and warmth.

Signs that physical abuse is taking place include unusual injuries, injuries that have not received medical attention and medication disappearing.

## **Sexual Abuse**

This includes any forced or coerced involvement in sexual activity. It does not necessarily involve physical contact between the perpetrator and victim. Non-contact abuse includes being forced to look at photographs or videos of a sexual nature and being verbally sexually harassed. It is important to recognise that sexual abuse may be perpetrated by any member of the household, not just male partners.

The signs are likely to be very similar to those of emotional abuse unless the presentation is a physical injury.

## **Financial Abuse**

This includes any act of theft of money or property or use of money or property without the adult's consent or without the appropriate legal authority. This often includes the misuse of money intended for, or belonging to an adult, by someone who has been trusted to handle their finances or who has assumed control of their finances by default.

## **Neglect**

This is the failure to meet the needs of a person who is dependent on others for those needs to be met. It may be either intentional or unintentional. Signs may be such things as malnutrition, hunger, bedsores or ulcers.

## **Discrimination**

This includes discrimination on the grounds of a person's race, sex, sexuality, religion, age and disability.

## **Spiritual Abuse**

The seriousness of depressive illness is not always recognised; expert help should always be sought. Spiritual abuse may occur if illness is misinterpreted resulting in pressure to confess or to undergo exorcism. Deliverance ministries or exorcism should **not** be carried out without the Diocesan Adviser in Deliverance Ministry being involved.

Churches need to be sensitive in their pastoral care, so that they do not attempt to force 'religion' onto people, particularly those who may be vulnerable to such practices.

## **Violence and Abuse within Relationships**

This may include physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse. An example of this would be the tormenting of a person who is confined to a wheelchair or a gross failure to attend to their needs.

## **Structural Abuse**

The way a church is structured/organised may result in the demeaning or abuse of the vulnerable. This might involve a failure to include such people within the family of the church or a failure to provide appropriate facilities. Active efforts should be made to make all church activities accessible to those who are less able.

## **Capacity and the legal actions that can be taken to protect an Adult**

The prime principle that underpins both current law and medical practice is that a person should be enabled and encouraged to take for themselves those decisions, which they are able to take.

Some key principles in assessing capacity are that the individual must have the ability:

- To understand and retain information relevant to the decision in question.

- To weigh that information in the balance and arrive at a choice.
- To communicate their decision.

To demonstrate capacity individuals should be able to:

- Understand in simple language what is being proposed.
- Understand the principal benefits, risks and alternatives.
- Retain the information long enough to make an effective decision.
- Make a free choice.

When an adult does not have the capacity to make their own decisions it is important to know who, if anyone has the power to act on their behalf. This includes:

- A person who has been granted Power of Attorney at the request of the adult when they had capacity. This may be a general power of attorney when the person can act on behalf of the adult in all matters or may only relate to financial matters.
- A person or agency acting as a Guardian under the Mental Health Act (1983) or a manager of a hospital or nursing home where a person is detained under the Mental Health Act.
- An agency acting to pursue their responsibilities e.g. their duty of care.

## **Appointment of Staff and Volunteers who will have access to Vulnerable Adults**

All staff and volunteers who are to have regular direct contact with vulnerable adults as part of an organised church activity eg home visiting, home communions, will be asked to complete a confidential declaration form, provide the names of 2 referees and undergo a Criminal Records Bureau check. Appointments will not be confirmed until the results of the checks and references are available. Appointments will be provisional for the first 3 months.

This does not apply to friends visiting informally.

All staff, including incumbents and volunteers is expected to:

- Be conversant with this policy and guidelines
- Relate to vulnerable adults in an appropriate way
- Report any suspected abuse.

## **Encountering Actual or Alleged Abuse**

In situations where there is alleged or suspected abuse this should be discussed with one or more of the following people:

- The Incumbent
- The Parish Vulnerable Adult Protection Representative
- The Diocesan Vulnerable Adult Adviser

The person suspecting abuse should decide who the most appropriate person to contact is.

If the worker is a witness to abuse or comes into a situation where abuse has just taken place their priorities should be:

- To call the emergency medical services if appropriate
- To call the police where a crime had been committed
- To ensure that any evidence is preserved
- To record what they observed
- To report to the incumbent, adult protection adviser or diocesan adult protection adviser as soon as possible.

No attempt should be made to investigate an incident of abuse; this is the role of the Statutory Agencies. Nothing should be done to alert the alleged perpetrator unless this is necessary for the immediate protection of the adult.

*This policy is intended to raise awareness of the problems of vulnerability in adults, but can not and does not cover every possible scenario; however it can be used for guidance in particular areas. The National Policy 'Promoting a Safe Church', Policy for safeguarding adults in the Church of England, covers working with adults, who may be vulnerable, in much greater detail and we would encourage parishes to purchase a copy of this helpful publication.*

## Useful Phone Numbers

### *Diocesan*

- \* **Vulnerable Adults Adviser**  
Dr Tony Wellsted 01274 587558
- \* **Disability Adviser**  
Margaret Beatham 01943 607253
- **Adviser in Deliverance Ministry**  
(number available through the Bishop's Office or Kadugli House)

### *Local Authority Contacts*

- **Adult Protection Coordinator Bradford** 01274 434442
- **Adult Protection Coordinator Leeds** 0113 2243511
- **Elder Abuse Response Line** 080 8808 8141
- **Lancashire Social Services** 01772 534285  
out of hours 01772 316844
- **Adult Protection North Yorkshire** [Sally.Anderson@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:Sally.Anderson@northyorks.gov.uk)
- **Harrogate** 01423 568099
- **Cumbria Social Services** 01539 773377
- **Craven** 01756 793700
- **Selby** 01757 213651
- **Ripon** 01765 608636
- **Northallerton** 01609 779999
- **Scarborough** 08459 501555

# APPENDIX 1

## Definition of Vulnerability

Human beings are, by their very nature, subject to the chances and changes of this world. Each one has strengths and weaknesses, capacities and restrictions. At some time everyone will be vulnerable to a wide range of pressures, concerns or dangers. No one is 'invulnerable'; some people may consider themselves to be strong but, when circumstances change, strengths can quickly disappear. Some people by reason of their physical or social circumstances have higher levels of vulnerability than others. It is the Christian duty of everyone to recognise and support those who are identified as being more vulnerable. In supporting a vulnerable person we must do so with compassion and in a way that maintains dignity. Vulnerability is not an absolute; an individual cannot be labelled as 'vulnerable' in the same way as a child is regarded as such. Childhood is absolute: someone who is not yet eighteen years of age is, in the eyes of the law, a child; this is not the case with vulnerability. Some of the factors that increase vulnerability include:

- 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.

## Definitions for use with those who may be Vulnerable

In order to bring into focus those people for whom the Church should have a particular care this working definition may be helpful:

**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.**

A narrower definition is in use for the particular purpose of applying to the Criminal Records Bureau, but it should be noted that the latest government guidance *Safeguarding Adults* does not speak of 'vulnerable adults', which puts the onus on the victim of abuse, but rather concentrates on enabling adults to 'retain independence, well being and choice and to access their human right to live a life that is free from abuse and neglect'.

### **A definition of mistreatment, abuse and harm**

**Mistreatment** is defined in *No Secrets* as 'a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons'. In a church context it could be misuse of a pastoral or managerial relationship, from the most serious to less severe behaviour, which lies at its root. The term covers **abuse**, bullying and harassment. These categories are not watertight and can merge into one another. **Harm** is what results from mistreatment or abuse.

*(Taken from Promoting a Safe Church; policy for safeguarding adults in the Church of England)*

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **A model policy statement on the safeguarding of adults in a parish**

#### **Policy on the Safeguarding of Adults in the Church**

This statement was adopted by ..... (Parish) at a Parochial Church Council meeting held on .....

This policy will be reviewed each year to monitor the progress which has been achieved.

1. We recognise that everyone has different levels of vulnerability and that each of us may be regarded as vulnerable at some time in our lives.
2. As members of this parish we commit ourselves to respectful pastoral care for all adults to whom we minister.
3. We commit ourselves to the safeguarding of people who may be vulnerable, ensuring their well-being in the life of this church.
4. We commit ourselves to promoting safe practice by those in positions of trust.
5. The Parish commits itself to promoting the inclusion and empowerment of people who may be vulnerable.
6. It is the responsibility of each of us to prevent the physical, emotional, sexual, financial and spiritual abuse of vulnerable people and to report any such abuse that we discover or suspect.
7. We undertake to exercise proper care in the appointment and selection of those who will work with people who may be vulnerable.
8. The parish is committed to supporting, resourcing, training and regularly reviewing those who undertake work amongst people who may be vulnerable.

9. The Parish adopts the guidelines of the Church of England and the Diocese.
10. Each person who works with vulnerable people will agree to abide by these recommendations and the guidelines established by this church.

This church appoints ..... to represent the concerns and views of vulnerable people at our meetings and to outside bodies.

Incumbent .....

Churchwarden .....

Churchwarden .....

Date .....

*(Taken from Promoting a Safe Church: policy for safeguarding adults in the Church of England)*

*This can be adapted to suit the needs of parishes or groups of churches or individual groups.*

# APPENDIX 3



The Church of England

## Confidential Declaration for those seeking to work with vulnerable adults

The Parish of

.....

This form is **strictly confidential** except under compulsion of law, and will be seen only by the Incumbent or Priest in Charge, or the person appointed by the PCC to appoint workers, and where appropriate the Bishop's Adviser for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults.

All forms will be kept securely under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name ..... Phone no. ....

Address.....

.....

.....

Post Code .....

### The group with which you intend to work:

Details of the group

.....

Venue .....

How often .....

*Please give details of previous experience in looking after or working with vulnerable adults.*

**Have you a relevant qualification? Please give details.**

## **Referees**

Please provide the names and addresses of two people who have known you for at least two years and who would be able to provide a personal reference.

**1**

**2**

All organisations including churches are required to take steps to safeguard vulnerable adults entrusted to their care. A vulnerable adult for this purpose means anyone over the age of 18 years who:- receives accommodation, nursing or personal care in a care home, needs personal care or support to live in their own home, has a learning or physical disability, a reduction in physical or mental capacity, a physical or mental illness, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs, a dependency on others or assistance in the performance of basic physical functions.

In accordance with the House of Bishop's policy we request you to answer the following questions. You will also be required to undergo a Criminal Records Bureau check.

*If the answer is yes to any question, please give details, using a separate sheet if necessary.*

***Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence (including any 'spent convictions' under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974)?***

**Yes**

**No**

If yes please give details: (technical motoring offences leading only to a fine need not be disclosed).

***Have you ever been cautioned by the police, given a reprimand or warning or bound over to keep the peace?***

**Yes**

**No**

**If yes please give details**

***Are you at present under investigation?***

**Yes**

**No**

**If yes please give details**

***Has your name been placed on the Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) List?***

**Yes**

**No**

***Has your conduct ever caused or been likely to cause significant harm to a vulnerable adult?***

**Yes**

**No**

If yes please give details (significant harm involves serious ill treatment of any kind including neglect, physical injury, emotional or sexual abuse, or the impairment of physical or mental development).

***To your knowledge has it ever been alleged that your conduct has resulted in any of these things?***

**Yes**

**No**

If yes please give details – include the date(s) and nature of the conduct, or alleged conduct, and whether you were dismissed, disciplined, moved to other work or resigned from any paid or voluntary work as a result.

*Have you any health problems that might affect your work with vulnerable adults? If yes please give details*

Yes

No

**Declaration**

I declare that the above information is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge.

Signed ..... Date .....

Full name ..... (please print)