

# Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults



**St Luke's Church**  
**Benefice of Cheltenham Minster with St Matthew and St Luke**

Policy, Procedures & Guidelines

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**The Lead Persons for Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults in this Church are**

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This document should be read in conjunction with 'Working with adults who are vulnerable' Advice and guidance on the Diocese of Gloucester's policy for working with vulnerable people in our churches and in local communities October 2012.

## Introduction

*Christian communities should be places where all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse. The church is particularly called by God to support those at the margins, those less powerful and those without a voice in our society, without compromising the authority of scripture on all related issues dealt with in this policy.*

*The Diocese of Gloucester has sought to raise awareness of the needs of vulnerable adults, both within society in general and more particularly within the church community.*

*Society is recognising that people are being harmed when they are vulnerable for various reasons, whether permanently or on a temporary basis, and this abuse can take place in their own homes, in residential care, at work or in other activities including those provided by the church. Some adults, who do not see themselves as 'vulnerable' under our working definition, may still find themselves exploited, bullied or abused. The safeguarding of adults when harm occurs is the responsibility of everyone. Awareness of the ways people can suffer from harm encourages church members to be vigilant both within and outside the church community.*

*This document is addressed to everyone in St. Luke's, but especially all ordained or lay members of the church who have some responsibility for the pastoral care of others or who expect to have contact with vulnerable people as defined in this policy.*

This policy was adopted by the PCC in mar 2019

Church Wardens

# 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 and social circumstances, have higher levels of vulnerability than others. It is the Christian duty of everyone to try 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 their 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 under a certain 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 (chronic or acute, and including dementia)
- An addiction to alcohol or drugs
- Failing faculties in old age
- A permanent or temporary reduction in physical, mental or emotional capacity brought about by life events, for example bereavement, previous abuse or trauma
- The need to act as a carer for others
- Domestic violence.

## Principles Underlying the Policy

The church can work towards creating a safe and non-discriminatory environment by being aware of some of the particular situations which create vulnerability. Issues which need to be considered include both the physical environment and the attitudes of the people involved. A person who might be considered vulnerable has the right to:

- be treated with respect and dignity
- have their privacy respected
- be able to lead as independent a life as possible
- be able to choose how to lead their lives
- have the protection of the law
- have their rights upheld regardless of their ethnicity, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religion or cultural background
- be heard within an appropriate forum.

# Policy

For the purpose of this document we define adults who may be vulnerable as:

**"Any young person aged 17 (not included in the 'Working with Children and Young People' policy) or 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 from significant harm or exploitation."**

We, the PCC and members of the church of St. Luke, Cheltenham commit ourselves to:

1. recognising that everyone has different levels of vulnerability and that each of us may be regarded as vulnerable at some time in our lives.
2. a respectful pastoral care for all adults to whom we minister.
3. the safeguarding of people who may be vulnerable, aiming to ensure their wellbeing in the life of this church.
4. promoting safe practice by those in positions of trust.
5. promoting the inclusion and empowerment of people who may be vulnerable.
6. taking responsibility to prevent the physical, emotional, sexual, financial and spiritual abuse of vulnerable people and to report any such abuse that we discover or suspect. (Appendix B gives more details of the types of abuse and Appendix C the action to be taken.)
7. exercising proper care in the appointment and selection of those who will work with people who may be vulnerable.
8. supporting, resourcing and training those who undertake work amongst people who may be vulnerable in order to safeguard the helper as well as the one who is vulnerable.

Each person who works with vulnerable people will agree to note this policy and follow, as far as possible, the guidelines set out in Appendix A.

This church appoints two suitable people as the Lead Persons. Each should complete the Social Service training for work with Vulnerable People. (See also Appendix D.)

This Policy will be reviewed each year and, if necessary, revised.

# Appendix A: Guidelines for Specific Circumstances

This policy lays down the general principles that we, as a church, seek to apply.

1. When working with older young people, the guidelines in our policy 'Working with Children and Young People', Appendix B should, where appropriate, be applied.
2. Prayer Ministers should be aware of this policy in conjunction with their own guidelines.
3. When visiting young people, vulnerable people of any age, or people known to be potentially violent formally on behalf of the Church:
  - Two people should visit if possible
  - If only one can go, a man should visit a man and a woman a woman and the visit should be known about by a third party who should be informed when the visit is completed
  - Where there might be trouble, a third party should be informed even when two people are visiting and a mobile phone should be taken and kept switched on. A clear exit should always be available.
4. If abuse is suspected in a care home, all the evidence you have should be written down and the advice of the Nominated Persons should be sought.
5. If, while an individual is providing transport to someone, an incident occurs which might be construed as improper or harming to any party, the incident should be reported to the Nominated Persons as soon as possible.
6. Where frail or unsteady people are being brought to or from church by a person who has been formally asked to do so by the Church:
  - A wheelchair should be used from the car to their seat in the church and back again to ensure the safety of both parties.
  - Any injury should be reported as soon as possible to the Church Office and recorded in the accident book.
  - If the person falls they should **not** be picked up (in case of further injury) but made comfortable and an ambulance called. If they insist on getting up they should be encouraged not to for their own safety and the safety of others.
7. No church member should transport in their car anyone who cannot support themselves when standing, such that they need to be lifted into the car seat.
8. All those speaking at our services, including preachers, leaders, the music group, and anyone giving notices or displaying notices on a board or on a screen should be careful not to put undue pressure on their hearers. This is particularly relevant to discussions of giving (whether of time or money or other things). A sensitive approach should be used by all, at all times.
9. A Health and Safety 'Risk Assessment' must be completed for all 'group' events that are not routine or are not held in St Luke's church building.

## Appendix B: Types of Abuse

Abuse might occur in any of the following ways. Someone may be subjected to more than one form of abuse.

- **Spiritual Abuse** – Churches need to be sensitive so that they do not, in their pastoral care, teaching or prayer ministry, attempt to ‘force’ religious values or ideas onto people, particularly those who may be vulnerable to such practices. Other forms of spiritual abuse include the denial to vulnerable people of the right to faith or the opportunity to grow in the knowledge and love of God.
- **Physical Abuse** – including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.
- **Psychological Abuse** – including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, inappropriate blaming controlling or isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks and including misuse of email, internet and text messaging.
- **Financial or Material Abuse** – including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- **Neglect and Acts of Omission** – including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate healthcare, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.
- **Discriminatory Abuse** – including discrimination on the bases of a person’s race, sex, disability or sexual orientation. Examples of discrimination include: harassment, hate crime, slurs or similar treatment.
- **Institutional Abuse** – the mistreatment or ‘abuse’ by a ‘regime’ or individual/s within an institution, e.g. a hospital, care home or day centre, or a church. It occurs where the individual’s wishes or dignity are consistently or repeatedly compromised to ensure the smooth running of an institution or organisation.

## **Appendix C: Action to be taken when Abuse is Suspected or if there is a Need to Safeguard**

The suspicion that a person is vulnerable to abuse or in need of safeguarding may vary from vague disquiet about inappropriate behaviour to clear evidence, with many intermediate levels. Information may come from different sources e.g. themselves, church or family member, fellow worker or one's own concern etc.

Anyone with such suspicions or receiving information should act to safeguard the person involved. They should be aware of and record in writing any information that has been shared and the context of it.

### **Advice on what to do if a vulnerable adult wants to talk**

Be aware that people often have difficulty expressing matters about abuse toward themselves or others.

- Let them know that you are willing to listen to anything they have to say.
- **Do not** promise them confidentiality. Explain that some things are so serious that you are required to report them to the Lead Person(s).
- Listen carefully to what they wish to share.
- Accept what they have to say, keep calm, and give them your full attention.
- Do not force information from them but enable them to say all they want to.
- Be sensitive to the possibility that they may have been, or feel threatened.
- Reassure the person of your support.
- Inform the person of the steps you are going to take with them or on their behalf and that you will let them know the outcome.

### **Recording the facts**

- As soon as possible record verbatim the interview, stating who was present, the time, date and place.
- If you suspect that there is a need to safeguard the person, make notes of the facts that lead you to this conclusion.

### **The next steps**

As far as possible, encourage the abused person to seek help, possibly from the Lead Person and assure them of your support in the process. The person who first suspects, or is told of alleged abuse or a need to safeguard is responsible for ensuring that the vulnerable person is heard. If that person refuses any help, advice should be sought from the Lead Person.

If the person making the disclosure of abuse would like the support of an independent advocate an appropriate referral will be made.

If there is no clear way forward, the Lead Person(s) will contact Social Services (phone: 01452 426868, or out of hours 01452 613194) or the Police (phone 101 and ask for the Control Room for Cheltenham) for advice according to circumstances.

Where abuse arises with a 17 year old, apply the procedures for 'Working with Children and Young People', involve those Lead persons and make reference to the Child Protection Unit.

If a church leader, lay or ordained, is accused of abuse or inappropriate behaviour the Lead Person(s) must inform the Bishop's Officer immediately. Any member of the Church with such information may go directly to the Bishop's Officer, but must inform the Lead Person(s) of their actions.

While no one will want to act without careful consideration, when the evidence is clear it is important to act without delay to avoid further abuse or harm. In such cases, where a criminal act is suspected and/or the person is thought to be in danger of imminent harm, the person with these concerns will contact the Police (phone 101). Following contact being made with the Police the Lead Person(s) will be informed immediately of this action. In all other cases the Lead Person will contact Social Services (phone 01452 426868) or the Police on 101. (To contact the Police from outside Gloucester or where 101 is unobtainable, phone 01452 726920). Any person with concerns about potential abuse may contact Social Services or the Police direct, but must then inform the Lead Person(s) of their actions.

Under **no** circumstance will the Lead Person(s) carry out the investigation. Their role is to collect and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion of abuse or the need to safeguard a vulnerable adult and provide the information to Social Services or Police, who task it is to investigate the matter under the relevant Acts of Parliament.

The PCC will support the Lead Persons in their role and accept that information they may have in their possession will be shared on a strictly need to know basis.

**The Lead Persons for Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults in this Church are**

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# Good Practice Guidelines

## For those in positions of trust or exercising pastoral ministry with vulnerable people

All those involved in ministry, whether paid or unpaid, clergy or lay should be working within a 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.

Exercising any kind of ministry involves workers developing an understanding of themselves and how they relate to others, how they increase the wellbeing 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.

### Ministry relationships

Church Staff, volunteers and members should:

- Exercise particular care when ministering to persons with whom they have a close personal friendship
- Be aware of the dangers of dependency in pastoral and professional relationships and seek advice
- If an inappropriate relationship develops, alternative arrangement should be made for the on going pastoral care of the person concerned
- Those who exercise a prayer/ healing ministry should be trained in the theology and non-intrusive practice of that work
- Recognize their limits and not undertake any ministry that is beyond their competence or role i.e. counselling, giving legal advice
- Treat those with whom they minister, visit or assist with physical needs, with respect encouraging self-determination, dependence and choice
- Not undertake any ministry while under the influence of drink or non-prescription drugs.

### Conversations, interviews and record keeping in Ministry

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

### The church worker should consider in advance

- The place of meeting, arrangement of furniture, lighting and their personal dress
- The balance of privacy for conversation with the opportunity for supervision and safety

- The physical distance between people determined by hospitality and respect i.e. maintain personal space.
- Whether the circumstance suggests 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/conversation in respect to subject matter, confidentiality and duration
- The appropriateness of initiating or receiving any physical contact, e.g. gestures of comfort, which may be unwanted or misinterpreted
- Consider keeping a daily record of pastoral encounters to include date, time, place, subject and action taken. (*The content of any encounter should only be recorded with the person's consent, unless there is suspicion of abuse or mistreatment, in which case consent is not required*).
- Any record should be factual and avoid rumour or opinion
- Records concerned with abuse should be kept indefinitely
- The publishing sharing or keeping of personal data or images should follow the appropriate legislation
- Whether it is appropriate to transmit sensitive information by email or text.

### **Appropriate actions**

Most people will have no difficulty accepting the core values of independence, choice, inclusively, privacy and respect necessary for good practice. However, it is sometimes difficult to think how this might be put into practice and the following should be helpful but not a complete list.

### **The church worker should keep in mind the following:-**

- Always use positive language, especially for a person who has a physical, mental, or learning disability. Avoid using 'labels', e.g. 'handicapped'.
- Respect dignity and feeling. Ask about personal preferences, forms of address, and how much help might be needed.
- Treat vulnerable people with the same respect you would when speaking to or about anyone else. Always refer to people by name.
- Use proper sign language for the deaf and those with learning difficulties.
- Ensure clear access to the church / meeting rooms to enable independence for e.g. wheelchairs, visual impairment, poor mobility.

- Ensure everyone with a disability has access to necessary books, papers, visual overheads, seating, coffee, toilet and car parking. *(Remember to be available to offer help should it be needed).*
- When visiting, give the same respect to a vulnerable person as to any other. Always knock on the door before entering their room or home. Ask permission to join them; respect their home and possessions, do not tidy up without permission. *(Many people rely on familiarity as navigation aids around their home).*
- Respect differences – be it in appearance, ability, ideas or Christian values. *(Do not assume that odd or challenging behaviour is a sign of demon possession, or impose healing ministry on a vulnerable adult without their permission)*
- Have a proper conversation using appropriate language. Ask about interest and hobbies.
- Vulnerable adults sometimes welcome physical contact, but remember to ask first.
- In some situations all that is required is: Silent company, listening, being available, social contact, accompanying to appointments. especially at times of bereavement, mental or physical illness, and distress.
- When talking to a wheel chair or mobility scooter user, it is polite to sit down and have eye-to-eye contact. If this is not possible, stand a little way away from them. *(It gives the person a stiff neck looking up all the time!)*
- Remember that wheelchair is part of the user's personal space, do not lean on it or move with out permission.
- Always maintain a vulnerable adult's personal space, as to enter this space can disorientate or throw off balance, e.g. a person with visual impairment or poor mobility.

# **Assume nothing – Always ask**

## **Support**

Church leaders and volunteers likely to have contact with vulnerable adults should:

- Receive safeguarding vulnerable adult training.
- Have an identified person to go to for support.
- Have open access to the Lead Persons for advice and support in relation to working/ ministering to vulnerable adults.

Good practice guidelines, covering physical, mental health issues and unseen disability can be found at [www.throughtheroof.org](http://www.throughtheroof.org).

## Appendix D: Role of the Lead Persons

The reason to have Lead Persons in each church is to ensure that others share with the staff the responsibility for safeguarding vulnerable adults. They will be persons to whom staff, leaders and volunteers may turn for support and advice, particularly if they have concerns about an adult or the behaviour of other workers.

The Lead Persons are jointly responsible with the Incumbent for the protection of vulnerable adults who come into the care of the church and for implementing this Policy.

The Lead Persons should:-

- Be familiar with both the Diocesan Policy and that of this Parish.
- Be familiar with the work of the church with vulnerable adults (17 and over).
- Be aware of volunteers working with vulnerable adults.
- Be alert to unusual behaviour, inappropriate action or relationship on the part of any church worker with a vulnerable adult or vice versa.
- In the event of suspicion or an allegation of abuse, know who to approach depending on the individual circumstances.
- Ensure that the church understands how vulnerable adults are best protected and assist the PCC in working towards best practice.
- Ensure that any record keeping conforms to the church's data protection policy as and when it becomes available.
- Attend training in adult protection, seek advice and information on latest best practice and keep the staff and those who work with vulnerable adults updated as appropriate.
- Be clear about the insurance cover for the church so that appropriate action can be taken if necessary.