



Safeguarding Policy for Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults

This statement was adopted at the Parochial Church Council meeting held on Tuesday 9th November 2021 and will be reviewed annually. Last review May 2026.

Safeguarding is not an optional extra. It is an essential part of the church's mission to care for the vulnerable and create cultures where people are not afraid to speak out if they have been harmed. This means embedding safeguarding practices in every level of church life, from leadership training to pastoral care, just as we try to instil doctrinal safeguarding in every part of our ministries too. It means ensuring that all allegations are reported to the proper authorities, with no exceptions. Due process matters. It is costly and time-consuming to do safeguarding well, but it is worth the effort.

In accordance with the Church of England Safeguarding Policy ('*A Safer Church*') our church is committed to:

- Promoting a safer environment and culture.
- Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church.
- Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation.
- Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons.
- Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons.
- Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others.

The Parish will:

- Create a safe and caring place for all.
- Have a named Parish Safeguarding Officer/s (PSO) to work with the incumbent and the PCC to implement policy and procedures.
- Safely recruit, train and support all those with any responsibility for children, young people and adults to have the confidence and skills to recognise and respond to abuse.
- Ensure that there is appropriate insurance cover for all activities involving children and adults undertaken in the name of the parish.
- Display in church premises and on the Parish website the details of who to contact if there are safeguarding concerns or support needs.
- Listen to and take seriously all those who disclose abuse.
- Take steps to protect children and adults when a safeguarding concern of any kind arises, following House of Bishops guidance, including notifying the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) and statutory agencies immediately.
- Offer support to victims/survivors of abuse regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred.
- Care for and monitor any member of the church community who may pose a risk to children and adults whilst maintaining appropriate confidentiality and the safety of all parties.
- Ensure that health and safety policy, procedures and risk assessments are in place and that these are reviewed annually.
- Review the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Practices at least annually.

Each person who works (including as a volunteer) within this church community will agree to abide by this policy and the guidelines established by this church.

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The church appoints **Alisdair Smith and Nikola Smith** to represent the concerns and views of vulnerable people at our meetings and to outside bodies.

Responsible persons:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • The Minister: | Tom Brown |
| • The Parish Safeguarding Officer(s): | Alisdair and Nikola Smith |
| • The Church Warden(s): | Richard Lillford |

Biblical Foundations

To glorify God

The earth and all within it are made for God and his praise (Romans 11:36; Revelation 4:11). The church and its ministries therefore exist primarily for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 6:20; 10:31; Isaiah 60:21). Having the glory of God as the chief end of the youth and children's work means we have:

- A duty of care for each young person, regardless of age, nationality, gender, sexuality, or background for they are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).
- A duty clearly and unashamedly to teach young people God's word without underestimating either the ability of children to understand the things of God or the power of the word of God in the lives of those who hear it.

Working with parents/caregivers

When the Bible speaks of young people and their education it speaks primarily to parents/caregivers. The home is where the young person spends the majority of their lives and has the largest effect on the people they grow up to be. It's therefore vital that our youth and children's work aids and equips parents/caregivers in their role in bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). In practice doing this will include:

- Keeping parents/caregivers informed about the content of the sessions their child attends.
- Leaders being approachable to parents/caregivers and open to discuss the sessions.
- Providing training on relevant issues facing parents/caregivers
- Recognising situations where parents/caregivers are not Christians and providing support and encouragement in those situations.

Mature church based disciples

In the great commission Jesus challenges us to make disciples, not just converts (Matthew 28:19ff; Colossians 1:28). Our children's and youth work therefore needs to be engaging and fun, but far more than merely entertainment. It is to be accessible and welcoming to those of all faiths and none but designed unashamedly to introduce young people to Jesus and then nurture and encourage them in following him. The Bible shows us that the main place for growth is church (Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 1:2). Jesus welcomed children into his company and into the company of adults (Mark 10:13-16). As a result, one key aspect of the youth and children's work is that the young people begin to own, enjoy, serve and be a part of the main gathered congregation of the church family. In practice doing this will include:

- Teaching the Bible in every meeting or group
- Resourcing and equipping the leaders of each group to understand and teach the Bible
- Providing an opportunity at each age range to have a group designed to get deeper into the word of God and a group to invite friends to.
- Allowing children to be children whilst their faith grows in maturity (Ecclesiastes 12:1; Colossians 1:28).

Live and speak for Jesus

At the heart of Christian maturity is a desire to take up our cross and follow Jesus (Matthew 16:24; 1 John 5:2; John 14:15). This desire is nurtured through a living relationship with the risen Lord Jesus. It sees sin as abhorrent, grace as astounding and, out of love, seeks to live a life which pleases God (Romans 8:12-17). This is as true of the faith of a 3-year-old as it is of a 53 or 83-year-old, but may be expressed differently. At the heart of our response to God's grace is a call and desire to share Jesus with others. Young people must be given both the space to enjoy a personal relationship with Jesus and the resources to speak of Him to their friends. In practice this will include:

- Leaders setting godly examples of mission and maturity. To this end all leaders are required to adhere to the youth and children's leaders agreement, set out as Appendix C to this policy.
- Training for speaking about Jesus and opportunities to invite friends.
- Support and encouragement to practically live as a Christian at their stage of life.

Throughout their lives

This vision for young people seeks not to divorce the child from the adult they will grow into. Statistics show that between 61% and 88% of confessing 18-year-olds are not Church attenders by the time they turn 30, and

this trend is only growing. As a result, it's vital that our youth and children's work links discipleship with regularly meeting with Christians of all ages, serving the church and being served. It is also important that the leaders share not only the Gospel, but also their lives with the young people (1 Thessalonians 2:8). This will show young people that Christian faith is not a children's activity but a life-long relationship (Philippians 1:6).

The effects of this are wide ranging but will include:

- Encouraging older youth to be involved in the morning services
- Working with the service leaders, music team, and preachers to ensure that, as far as is possible, the content and style of services are accessible for young people
- Encouraging parents/caregivers to see church as a positive thing, being willing to serve as well as be served
- Ensuring all-age services are of the highest quality and offering resources to preachers
- Delivering teaching about the church within the children and youth curriculum
- Teaching young people to submit to, treasure, be passionate about, feed on, love, share and handle the Bible for themselves. In short: to be set on fire by God's word.

Statement of Aims

Our aims are:

- To offer people opportunities to engage with, think and learn about the Christian faith in different contexts
- To help all people in their Christian discipleship deepening their Christian faith
- To enable people to experience the love of God
- To encourage a strong Christian fellowship
- Help all people realise their full potential physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.
- To encourage all people to take a full part in the Church's life and worship
- To encourage all people to become responsible adults
- To provide a safe meeting place for all people
- To provide indoor and outdoor leisure activities for young people that are safe, and risk assessed.
- To uphold everyone's equality in the sight of God.

Furthermore:

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 community.
4. We commit ourselves to promoting safe practice by those in positions of responsibility.
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.

Each person who works with vulnerable people will agree to abide by these recommendations and the guidelines established by this church.

This document covers the work of the parish with children, young people and vulnerable adults, in its services and in the groups meeting throughout the week. This includes activities such as:

Regular Midweek Groups

- Church Together Tuesday 14:45-16:15 @ COGS
- Little Lambs Baby & Toddlers Friday 9-11 @ COGS church hall
- Community group Wednesday 14:00-16:00 @ COGS
- Community coffee mornings Various ages, days and times
- Growth Groups Various days, places and times
- 1-to-1 Bible Studies Various days, places and times
- Ladies' Bible Study Tuesday 14:00-15:00 @ COGS

Regular Sunday Groups

- Main Service Sunday 10:00-11:30 @ COGS
- Children's Church Sunday 10:00-11:30 @ COGS
- Bacon, Brew and Bible 4th Sunday 09:00-09:45 @ COGS
- Care Home Service 3rd Sunday 15:30-16:15 @ COGS church hall

This policy also covers any work undertaken outside of the church buildings but under the umbrella of the PCC.

Policy Statement

This PCC adopts the policy statement of the Diocese and will display it prominently in all church premises. The PCC expects all church workers to follow this policy and will display it in a prominent place. Special measures are in place regarding 1-to-1 Bible Studies.

We are committed to pursuing high standards in caring for the children, young people and vulnerable adults entrusted to us. This document sets out general principles and guidelines for all those involved in working with children at the churches in line with the Church of England Safeguarding Policy (*'Protecting All God's Children'*) and the Diocese of Sheffield's Safeguarding Policy.

Application of the Policy

- All new workers, whether paid or voluntary, working for church-based organisations, will be informed of the policy by the Parish Safeguarding Officer or the group leader. They will be expected to accept the policy and guidelines and work according to their requirements.
- All new members of the PCC will be required to accept the policy and guidelines.
- The Standing Committee of the PCC will oversee the Policy, and it will be placed on the Agenda of the PCC at least annually for review.
- The PCC will appoint a Parish Safeguarding Officers and will inform the Church House administrator of their details. **The appointed Parish Safeguarding Officer(s) are Alisdair Smith and Nikola Smith.**

Church Premises

- Any organisation booking the use of church premises will be informed of the need to observe the policy via a statement on the Booking Form. They should be expected to confirm they have a Safeguarding policy and appropriate insurance.
- Individuals booking church premises for private functions will have the policy drawn to their attention and accept their responsibility for protecting children at that function.

Recruitment

- The PCC will follow the Safer Recruitment process included in the Safeguarding Children Policy. References, the Confidential Declaration and DBS disclosure via the Diocesan system will be obtained. Appointment to any post, paid or voluntary, will not be made until these processes are complete.
- All appointments will be made on a conditional basis until the completion of a satisfactory probationary period.
- All those working with children, young people and vulnerable adults will follow the good practice guidelines in the Diocesan Safeguarding Children Policy and Guidelines (see appendix A) for the policy statement on the recruitment of ex-offenders).

Safer Recruiters

The following are trained Safer Recruiters and are authorised to process DBS checks on behalf of the PCC.

- **Claire Brown – Recruiter & Approver**
- **Alisdair Smith – Recruiter & Approver**
- **Nikola Smith – Recruiter**

Registration and Parental Consent

- All groups will keep a register of those attending each session.
- Parental consent forms, including emergency contact details, must be completed for all participants, and must be available to group leaders whenever the group meets. This applies to all groups, whether meeting on church premises or elsewhere.

Insurance

- The PCC will ensure that there is adequate insurance cover for all activities for children, young people & vulnerable adults.

Fire Regulations and Security

- All group leaders will be aware of fire regulations and the positions of fire extinguishers. They will be vigilant as to the presence of anyone on the premises during the meetings of the groups.
- They should know who to contact in an emergency relating to the building.

Ratios

The Diocese guidelines of ratios of adult helpers to children will be followed at all times. *On no account should an adult be by themselves with any age group.*

Age group	Staff	Children
0-2 years	1 for every	3
2-3 years	1 for every	4
3-5 years	1 for every	8
5-8 years	1 for every	8
Over 8 years	1 for the first 8 children and then 1 for each additional 12	

General Guidelines

General Attitude to Children

We want to treat the children, young people and vulnerable adults in our care with respect and dignity. Therefore, we will want to:

- Avoid ridiculing, scapegoating, or humiliating children.
- Avoid showing favouritism to any children.
- Be aware of speech, tone of voice and body language and the effect that it has on the children.
- Treat each child as an individual and do not make comparisons between children (whether peers or siblings)
- Work hard to encourage the children, highlighting their strengths and where appropriate giving them responsibilities.
- Except for duly authorised, trained and DBS-checked volunteers, it is the church's policy that only female volunteers and those with parental responsibility for children present are allowed to help with crèche groups.

Physical Contact

Physical contact is a normal part of many relationships. There is no reason to avoid appropriate physical contact with children in our care. However, we need to ensure that such contact is neither inappropriate nor misunderstood. Therefore, we will want to:

- Keep everything public – avoid physical contact in any place or context that is not open and in sight of others.
- Remember that you will be stronger than most children.
- Avoid engaging in rough games or behaviour or in any activity that puts the child at unnecessary risk of injury.
- Avoid engaging in any activity or game that could be considered sexually provocative or stimulating.
- Avoid touch which is inappropriate to the age of the child – touch should be related to the child or young person's needs, not the workers. Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child or young person, rather than the worker.
- Respect the child – allow them to decide how much physical contact to have with others and in most cases allow them to initiate.
- All children and young people are entitled to personal privacy and the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others, except in circumstances such as a medical emergency.
- Encourage each other to avoid behaviour that might be perceived to be inappropriate. This will usually mean raising our concerns with fellow leaders either on the spot (if urgent) or after the event. Where we have concerns that behaviour is inappropriate, we may need to take further action – see below.
- When giving first aid (or applying sun cream etc), encourage the child or young person to do what they can themselves but, in their best interests giving appropriate help where necessary.
- Team members should monitor one another in the area of physical contact. They should be free to help each other by constructively challenging anything which could be misunderstood or misconstrued.
- Concerns about abuse should always be reported.

Toileting

Only female volunteers are to take children to the toilet. Helpers should generally wait outside for the child. If the child needs help in the toilet the leader can go in with the child, but the door should be kept unlocked.

Crèche

Nappies may need to be changed during crèche. As a general principle, nappies must be changed by parents/caregivers/carers, however, if you are female, the parents/caregivers have given you permission, and you are comfortable doing so, then please follow these guidelines:

- Tell another leader you are about to change a nappy.
- Use the changing mat in crèche (unless an older child expresses discomfort or unease about being changed in public).
- Tell parents/caregivers after the service that you had to change their child's nappy during crèche.
- Wash your hands afterwards using the sink in the toilet.

Some of the children in our younger groups may ask for help when it comes to toileting – in these instances it is best to get parents/caregivers from Church, as a Group leader it is not your responsibility to help the children use the toilet, that remains with their parents/caregivers. If a parent has asked you to help their child, and you are comfortable doing so then that is acceptable but do observe the guidelines above and remember that if you are uncomfortable helping a child use the toilet then you do not have to.

Discipline

From time to time, children will engage in unacceptable behaviour and as responsible leaders, we must be ready to discipline them. Our fundamental principle is to discipline out of a love and concern for the individual and group never than just anger or irritation on our part.

Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour

- Act sooner rather than later – be observant and do not let situations get out of control.
- Ensure that you understand the situation as fully as possible – give the children involved opportunity to explain.
- Pinpoint the behaviour that you find unacceptable.
- If appropriate, mention positive behaviour and encourage them to extend it.
- Avoid raising past (and possibly unrelated) behaviour in general terms – e.g. ‘What’s wrong with you? You’re always so selfish’.
- Explain to the child the implications of their behaviour for other individuals and the group as a whole.
- Ask them to respect other individuals and the group.
- If they refuse, lay down clear and specific rules and explain what will happen if these rules are not kept.
- Ensure that you carry out the action that you have indicated.
- Judge your response accordingly and escalate your sanction if children continue to misbehave – for example:
 - General request to behave acceptably.
 - Specific rules (e.g., ‘please don’t climb on the table’)
 - Separate child from others
 - Have the child sit in a particular place (e.g., in front of you or next to another leader)
 - Speak to their parents/caregivers later.
 - Send them out / take them to their parents/caregivers now.

After the Event

- Reflect on why the child may be behaving in this way.
- Reflect on whether there is something that can be changed in the structure of the club that would help remove the opportunity or temptation for unacceptable behaviour (e.g., are the children bored?)
- Discuss persistent unacceptable behaviour with other leaders and decide on a consistent course of action.
- Reflect on whether you should you alert the child’s parents/caregivers and ask their advice. General Guidelines
- As leaders take a collective approach to discipline – do not side with a child against another leader or allow children to play leaders off against each other.
- If you have concerns about the approach taken by a leader do raise your concerns but do not do it in front of the children – either take them aside there and then (if it is urgent) or speak to them afterwards.
- Be wise in deciding whether to discipline a child in front of others or whether to take them to one side.
- DO NOT use physical punishment (e.g., smacking)
- DO NOT shout, use a change in tone instead.
- Stop abusive peer activities (e.g., ridiculing, bullying, name-calling) at the earliest opportunity and make it clear that they will not be tolerated.

What to do if a child makes inappropriate advances or engages inappropriate behaviour

- Tell the child that their language or behaviour is unacceptable, even if this is embarrassing for you or for them.
- Tell the Group Leader or Parish Safeguarding Officer of the incident, again, however embarrassing the incident might be.
- Agree with the Group Leader or Parish Safeguarding Officer what action should be taken to help the child and to minimise the chance of a recurrence.
- The Group Leader or Parish Safeguarding Officer should file a brief written record of the incident ideally within an hour (and within 24-hours at the absolute most).

Health & Safety

We must be careful to ensure the safety of the children in our care.

- Ensure that you have access to a telephone and first aid kit in the place where you are meeting.
- Take special care with children when:
 - crossing the road
 - ascending and descending stairs
 - where hot liquids are present (e.g., kitchen)
- Ensure that after the group has finished, the children are supervised until they are picked up by their parents/caregivers.
- Ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of parent's contact details.
- Ensure that you are familiar with any specific medical requirements of the children in your care – these are detailed on the Parent's Declaration forms stored in the Children's folder.
- Do not allow children with infectious illnesses to attend the group.
- Ensure that there is a route of escape in event of a fire.

Food and Hygiene

- We will ensure basic hygiene in the preparation of food and drink.
- If any group is involved in the preparation or selling of food, at least one leader should have completed the food hygiene and food safety course to ensure good practice is followed.

First Aid and Accidents

- Each group will have at least one adult present who has attended a basic course on first aid.
- There should be a properly stocked first aid kit accessible to each group.
- In the event of any accident, an incident and accident report form should be completed. This should be kept securely in a marked file. Parents/caregivers should also be informed of any accident.

General Precautions

We must take reasonable precautions to ensure the safety and comfort of the children, young people and vulnerable adults who are entrusted to our care. Although the process can seem a little excessive it is designed for the benefit of all concerned and is not meant to be offensive.

Selection of Leaders

All those who will encounter children at the churches will be asked to complete a Confidential Declaration form and Job Application form before so doing. These forms ask for information regarding both past experience in working with children and any potential cause for concern (e.g., past convictions, allegations). The forms also ask for the names of two referees (these referees must satisfy certain conditions). The information collected will be used to assess an individual's suitability for work with children.

All individuals will need to complete such a form to be involved in working with children at the churches. They may be asked to fill in a form again in subsequent academic years whilst they continue to be involved. At least one reference will be taken up, with the referee being asked to complete a standard 'Referee's Declaration'.

All those who will be leading or helping with children's clubs will also be asked for a DBS disclosure. This must now be a DBS specifically for children's work at the churches. While an application for a DBS disclosure is being processed, a new helper may join in with a children's club but only if they are under the supervision of an experienced, DBS checked leader.

Only once the Parish Safeguarding Officer is satisfied that suitable scrutiny has taken place will the individual be able to take up a position involving work with children. In addition, it will be our general practice not to have a single individual alone with a group of children for a prolonged period.

Occasional helpers with the crèche, including mothers of the children in the crèche, will not be expected to produce a DBS disclosure, but there will always be a Supervisor in the Crèche who has satisfied the Parish Safeguarding Officer in this way. Occasional helpers will never be left in sole charge of a child or group of children.

Examples of those who will need to satisfy the Parish Safeguarding Officer include:

- Children's Church Group Leaders and Helpers
- Crèche Supervisors
- Children and Youth Group leaders
- Holiday Club Helpers
- Helpers with the children's programme at occasional events such as a Weekend Away.

The rota for each of these activities will take these principles into account. This therefore has a bearing on which individuals are available to cover for a leader who is unable to make a particular club. The Parish Safeguarding Officer should therefore be informed of all such swaps **in advance** where possible.

Parental and Child Information

Prior to a child being involved in a Children's Group, where a parent/guardian is not present, we will ask those responsible for the child to complete a 'Parent's Declaration'. This form asks for information about the child (e.g., name, age, allergies/ medical condition/s, learning difficulties) and about the parent (e.g., contact information). The form also requests the parent's consent for their child's involvement. This form must be completed at the beginning of the club/activity. Registers will be provided to keep accurate records of the attendance of children and adults. For more details of how data is handled and stored see our Privacy Policy.

Incident Record Forms

Should any out of the ordinary incident occur (e.g., accident, injury, allegation of abuse), an incident record sheet should be completed by those either involved or responsible for taking action. This form asks for information regarding the incident and what action was taken. Incident report forms can be found in the vestry desk drawer.

After completing an incident report form, please return it to the Parish Safeguarding Officer. An annual review will be completed by the PSO to determine where there are trends of incidents occurring.

Maintaining Records

Information collected as detailed above will need to be carefully stored for possible referral in the future.

Information stored securely in a lockable filing cabinet in the church vestry includes:

- Completed Leader's Declaration forms
 - Completed Referee's Declaration forms
 - Completed Registers
 - Completed Incident Record forms
- Information stored in the Children's Folder includes:
- Completed Parent's Declaration forms - with the emergency contact details.
 - Registers currently in use.
 - A copy of this policy and guidelines

These records will be kept indefinitely.

Training

We want to be able offer children the best possible care. We are committed to improving the leadership we offer to them. Therefore, we are committed to a continued pattern of training in teaching and looking after children (including the areas described in this document).

Photography

Images count as personal data under the General Data Protection Rules 2018. Therefore, before photographs of any kind are taken within children's groups the church requires consent in writing from a parent/guardian. If a photograph is taken by a Group Leader on their mobile phone for the purposes of a game/activity, this must be deleted immediately after use.

Social Media Contact

If social media is used to contact children then the following guidelines should be adhered to:

- Keep everything public and accessible to all users. Ensure that any social media is moderated and that there is appropriate access and password verification. If using Facebook, X etc. ensure that the page you are using is one used for professional work purposes and not a personal page. Before sending any messages, please think how it could be interpreted by the recipient.
- It is not appropriate to use a personal account and profile for your work on behalf of the church with young people. Instead you should create a professional 'page' to manage all of your communications with the young people you work with.
- Your supervisor/another youth worker should be aware of the account name and password so that they can log onto the account at any time to see and monitor all communications. Young people should be made aware that information is shared in this way.
- The organisation/church name should be clearly visible on the page you create – it is also useful to add alternative work contact details, such as a phone number or website.
- All communications via social networking sites are recorded, stored indefinitely and made available to statutory authorities when requested or if found to be offensive or criminal in nature.
- Any communication or content that raises concerns should be saved or printed and the concerns discussed with a supervisor and/or the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

Phone Contact

If e-mail, or text messaging is used to contact children then the following guidelines should be adhered to:

- **Phone numbers:** All 'staff' members will be given a second, separate work number. These work phone numbers should be the only numbers that young people are given; a worker's personal phone number should remain private. Leaders should not store contact details for young people on personal devices such as mobile phones and should refrain from contacting them via private messages.
- **Text messaging/WhatsApp:** Take extra care when using ensure that you save text messages as text files so that a record exists. Texts or voicemails that raise concerns should be saved and passed on to a supervisor or, where there is a safeguarding concern, discussed with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. Any conversations raising concerns should be discussed as soon as possible and in the event of a safeguarding concern within 24 hours.
- Texts or voicemails that raise concerns should be saved and passed on to a supervisor or, where there is a safeguarding concern, discussed with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. Any conversations raising concerns should be discussed as soon as possible and in the event of a safeguarding concern within 24 hours.

1-to-1 Arrangements

1-to-1 bible studies are to be encouraged as a wonderful way of discipling young people, but leaders must be extra vigilant in these scenarios. The following guidance must be followed:

- Meetings must always take place in a public venue or with another leader present.
- Young people must always feel comfortable with the leader and know they are freely able to leave.

Travel Arrangements

Parents/caregivers must be reminded that it is their responsibility to transport children to and from groups. Leaders must never be left alone with a young person, including car trips, or walking them home (unless parental consent has been explicitly granted). Where groups are being transported, the driver must ensure that suitable car seats are provided, and parental consent has been obtained.

Abuse and Neglect

Sadly, abuse and neglect do occur. Without being paranoid, we need to recognise this and to be alert to the possibility of abuse or neglect by either those within or without the church. An explanation of abuse and neglect and some signs that might be associated with them are given at the back of this document. The following sections detail what action should be taken if abuse is alleged or suspected.

What to do if someone begins a conversation regarding inappropriate behaviour

The aim is to ensure that the individual is given the opportunity to make the statement they want to make, as clearly and as fully as possible. This is **not** the time to investigate or to judge the matter. If possible, try to have another adult present whilst they speak (perhaps by delaying the conversation). However, do not prevent them from speaking if this is not a possibility or if it would unduly inhibit them.

Things to Do

- **Provide an environment in which they can explain clearly and fully the nature of their complaint.**
 - Give them time to talk freely and without fear of being overheard.
 - Give them your full attention.
 - Try to be sympathetic and to reassure them that it is right to speak with you, e.g., 'Thank you for telling me'.
 - Stay with them until you feel they have said everything they want to say.
- **Explain**
 - Explain to them what you will do next in a way that they can understand and assure them that you will let them know what happens.
 - Find out whether they would be happy to speak to another adult about what they have said.
 - Try not to leave them in a distressed state.
- **Follow Up the Incident**
 - Write down as fully as possible the content of the conversation (include what you said and any observations of how they appeared). Do this as soon as possible (ideally within an hour)
 - Speak as soon as possible to a 'responsible person' as explained in the next section.
 - Do not speak to anyone else about the matter at this stage.
 - If they need urgent medical attention, ensure that they receive it as soon as possible.
 - Ensure that they are kept informed of what is happening.
 - Until further action is taken, where there is continued contact with them, try to ensure that this is as normal possible. Only discuss the issue further if they raise it.
- **Remember**
 - that they may want the abuse to stop but still love the abuser
 - that they may think that you are able to stop the abuse without anything else happening to that they may have been bribed or threatened not to talk
- **Pray**

Things to Avoid

- **Promising secrecy or confidentiality:** If pressed, explain that you will need to tell other responsible adults for the benefit of them.
- **Investigating:** Be very careful not to put words into their mouth and don't press for information. Avoid asking questions except where it is absolutely necessary to clarify a point of detail.
- **Judging the situation:** Do not pass judgment on them or the matter being presented. Rather just collect information. Even if they appear to you to have acted unwisely or to have broken a rule, at this stage avoid anything in your words or manner that is reproachful towards them, e.g. 'Why didn't you tell me earlier?'
- **Embellishing details:** When making a disclosure to a Responsible Person try to recount only the facts they confirmed to you, not what you suspect to be the case, this is important for the report to be accurate.
- **Panic or shock:** Try to retain your composure. Avoid appearing shocked or saying anything that might make them feel more embarrassed about talking to you, e.g. 'I can't believe it!' 'Are you sure that this is true?'

What to do if you receive an allegation of, or suspect abuse of any kind

Children, young people and vulnerable adults should have the opportunity to raise any concerns about any health and safety or protection matters.

If you suspect, or any allegation is made to you (by a child or an adult), that some form of abuse has taken place (whether in the context of the churches activity or elsewhere), please contact one of the 'responsible persons' listed above as soon as possible. In normal circumstances those nearer the top of the list should be approached first. However, if one or more of the individuals is implicated in the suspicion or allegation, please contact one of the other 'responsible persons'. If all are implicated, you will need to contact a responsible external agency (e.g., Diocese of Sheffield Safeguarding Office, Social Services, NSPCC).

The action the 'responsible person' will take depends on the exact nature of the suspicion or allegation. In all cases they will:

- Ascertain from you the precise details of the allegation or suspicion (they may ask you to fill out an 'incident report' form)
- Inform other 'responsible persons' if necessary and appropriate.
- Keep a written record of information collected and decisions made using the 'incident report' form.

In addition, they will take the following action:

In the case of a suspicion or allegation of sexual abuse:

- Limit their investigation to clarifying specific details.
- Refer it to the Incumbent and/or Parish Safeguarding Officer and the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.
- If it is urgent contact the Social Services Duty Worker, Police Child Protection Team or Sheffield Diocesan Safeguarding Officer for advice ensure that you then inform the Incumbent and the Parish Safeguarding Officer that this has been done.

In the case of a suspicion or allegation of other serious forms of abuse:

- Contact the Social Services Duty Worker, Police Child Protection Team or Sheffield Diocesan Safeguarding Officer for advice on the appropriate action to take.

In the case of physical assault:

- Ensure that medical attention has been received.
- Ensure that the police have been alerted.

If, at any stage, you feel that the child is in imminent danger, you should contact the police or Social Services immediately.

If you are not satisfied with the action that has been taken, then you retain a responsibility as a member of the public to report serious matters to the Social Services Department and should do so without hesitation.

What are abuse and neglect?

Abuse

Abuse involves potentially or actually causing harm to someone. It can take a number of forms, including the following:

- Emotional Abuse:** Persistent emotional ill-treatment such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless, unloved, or inadequate. It may also involve frequently frightening a child or making them feel in danger or persistent rejection or humiliation.
- Physical Abuse:** Causing physical harm.
- Sexual Abuse:** Actual or potential involvement in sexual activity or sexually inappropriate behaviour (including the production or use of pornographic material), whether or not they are aware of what is happening. This includes deliberately causing a child to look at such material or activity.
- Domestic abuse:** Domestic abuse is any incident of threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of their gender or sexuality. Domestic abuse has an impact on

children because: they are at an increased risk of physical injury (by accident or because they attempt to intervene); they are greatly distressed by witnessing the physical and emotional suffering of a parent; exposure to parental conflict can lead to serious anxiety and distress; children in violent households are more likely to be exposed to other forms of abuse.

- v. **Spiritual abuse:** Within faith communities harm can be caused by the inappropriate use of religious belief or practice, including the misuse of leadership authority or discipline, oppressive teaching, obtrusive/healing, and deliverance ministries (including abuse linked to belief in spiritual possession) or rituals, any of which may result in others experiencing physical, emotional, or sexual harm.
- vi. **Group leaders should also be aware that other forms of abuse can occur:**
- Stranger abuse
 - By electronic communication, including internet abuse, or texting.
 - Bullying – including by electronic communication
 - Fabricated or induced illness
 - Abuse of disabled children
 - Deliberate self-harm
 - Allegations of possession by evil spirits
 - Child trafficking – including county lines
 - Sexual exploitation
 - Forced marriage
 - Peer abuse – including sexual abuse such as upskirting, etc.
 - Online abuse – including being drawn into extremist groups, pornography or online gambling, etc.

Neglect

Neglect involves a persistent failure to meet someone's basic needs. This includes failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, or appropriate medical care. It also includes failure to take reasonable steps to protect a child from potential or actual harm.

General Observations

- Abuse may be spontaneous or organised. Organised abuse involves one or more abusers and a number of abused children.
- Most cases of abuse or neglect involve those already known to the child rather than complete strangers.
- Abuse may be inflicted by other children.
- Children with special needs are especially vulnerable to abuse.

What signs of potential abuse?

Abuse and neglect can be difficult to spot. However, any of the following observations may be a sign of abuse or neglect. However, in many cases, there will be another explanation.

General Indicators / Indicators of Emotional Abuse

In general, **changes** in someone's behaviour or mood, either suddenly or over a period of time, may be significant. Such changes may be particularly important where they become more **withdrawn** or more **aggressive**. Examples of such changes are listed below.

Mood

- Anxiety or depression
- 'Frozen watchfulness'
- Loss of ability to learn or concentrate.
- Obsessions, phobias, or fears
- Loss of self-esteem

Behaviour towards others

- Excessive attention seeking
- Truancy, running away or withdrawal.
- Aggression
- Stealing or Lying
- 'Clinginess'

Lifestyle

- Loss of appetite
- Eating disorders
- Severe sleep disturbances and persistent tiredness

Indicators of Physical Abuse

- Reluctance to reveal parts of the body (e.g., remove a jumper when hot)
- Repeated urinary infections or tummy pains.
- Marks of injury, especially injuries which:
 - have not received medical attention.
 - are not consistent with the explanation provided.
 - occur to the body in places not usually exposed to falls and other accidents.

Guide to Injuries

- Bruises, especially:
 - those in or around the mouth
 - those of different colours (indicates injuries of different ages)
 - those from fingertips, especially on arms, chest or face indicating tight gripping or shaking.
 - those from belt, implement, hand.
 - those around earlobes (also signs of tears)
 - those to head or soft tissue areas of the body
- Bite-marks
- Burns and scalds, especially:
 - those with a clear outline – in particular, circular (e.g., cigarette burn) or linear (e.g., from hot metal rod)
 - those of a uniform depth over a large area
 - those caused by friction (e.g., from being pulled across a carpet)
 - those surrounded by a clear water line (e.g., from immersion or pouring of hot water)
 - those surrounded by splash marks (e.g., where hot liquid has been thrown)
 - those that have caused scars (indicating previous burns)
- Fractures, especially:
 - Any fracture on a child under one year
 - Any skull fracture on a child under four years
- Cuts, scratches

Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Level of sexual knowledge inappropriate to a child's age
- Indication of sexual activity through words, stories, drawing, games, or behaviour
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour towards adults or other children, especially where surprising given the age of the child.
- Pre-occupation with sexual matters and requests for sexual advice
- Allusions to unusual practices (e.g., unusual bed-sharing arrangements at home)

Neglect

- Under-nourishment
- Failure to grow.
- Constant hunger
- Stealing food
- Untreated illness

Each person involved in leading activities within the church community will agree to abide by this policy and the guidelines established by this church.

Domestic Abuse

“The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.” (Psalm 9:9)

Domestic abuse is an appalling and sinful reality in our fallen world. It is widespread in society, occurring in one quarter of all marriages and not limited to a particular section of the population, nor determined by gender, ethnicity or religion.¹ Tragically, research suggests that Christian women stay longer and suffer more severe abuse than their non-Christian counterparts.²

The vast majority of domestic abuse occurs within heterosexual relationships, and while women are more likely to be survivors³, men are victims too. Domestic violence and abuse also occur within LGBTQ+ relationships.

The bible is consistent in presenting a God who encourages the cries of the oppressed. In the same way, the Lord Jesus repeatedly stood up for the dignity of men and women that others looked down upon.⁴ All of his followers are called to do the same and as a church family we are committed to listening to the cry of the afflicted (Psalm 10:17).

Victims of domestic abuse are more likely to be those who have relatively less power in a given situation, and that social norms play a significant part in legitimising and sustaining the actions of perpetrators.⁵ We recognise that some victims of violence are reluctant to speak openly for fear of retaliation, personal shame, a desire not to be a burden and many other reasons.

Gospel

Christianity seeks to bring hope and comfort to victims of domestic abuse by pointing them back to the truths of the gospel. It is very common for victims to feel that God is indifferent or has abandoned them, and so they need to be encouraged in their faith. Suffering is always a time for God’s people to know and rely on the God who hears. In particular, we seek to remind victims that God does not forget (Psalm 10; 56:4); Jesus knows our sufferings (Isaiah 53:3,7); and that the cross is timeless evidence of God’s love for his people and his holy intolerance of sin.

Our starting point for help begins by listening as brothers and sisters who mourn with those who mourn (Romans 12:15).

Christians have a distinctive responsibility to live rightly under the law of God, and this includes obedience to the clear standard of gentleness and purity in familial relationships (Ephesians 5:22-6:9; Colossians 3:18-4:1). As a church we seek to pray for those who caught in abuse; to care for the vulnerable; safeguard the victims and seek justice against the perpetrator.

Definitions

Domestic abuse is any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of their gender or sexuality.⁶

¹ “The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey,” Centre for Disease Control, accessed 21 May, 2016, http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf.

² Sometimes Biblical interpretation on the topic of divorce and separation can cause confusion and allow violence and abuse to continue. Susan Hall, “The Theology of Domestic Violence,” *Views from the Edge* (Seattle: Mars Hill Graduate School, January 2006), 1.

³ It is estimated that around 1/3 of women will experience domestic violence in their lifetimes. 1/6 men will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime. Two women are killed every week by current or former partners and 30 men are murdered every year.

⁴ For verses that highlight how strongly God opposes oppression, see Genesis 16; Exodus 3:7–9; 1 Samuel 25; Psalm 9:9; 72:4; 103:6; 146:7-9; Isaiah 1:17; 14:3–4; 30:12–13; 54:14; Jeremiah 50:33-34; Zechariah 7:10; 9:8; Matthew 6:13; and Luke 4:18–19.

⁵ For further statistical information, please refer to The British Crime Survey, the NSPCC or Stonewall’s Gay & Bisexual Men’s / Women’s Health Survey (2013 and 2007 respectively).

⁶ Women may be perpetrators of abuse. We see this is true when we consider child abuse, we readily see women perpetrating abuse. In the parenting relationship they naturally have power which they can misuse. In marriages, however it is rarer that they have the power over their spouse though that can happen. Cf. Darby Strickland, “Words: A

Within the legal definition⁷, 'family members' are defined as: mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparents, whether or not directly related, in-laws or step-family. This definition includes:

- Any type of romantic/sexual/marital relationship where one party is abused by the other, whether it be within the same household or not
- Any situation where a child over the age of 16 is subjecting any other family member over the age of 16 (including a parent or guardian) to abuse
- Any situation that includes so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), and forced marriage.

Coercion and Control

Both coercion and control are key terms in the definition of domestic abuse. Controlling behaviour is defined as a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape, and regulating their daily life.

Coercive behaviour is defined as an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation, or other abuse, that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. This may include:

- Taking control over someone's everyday life, for example where they go, what they wear, etc.
- Monitoring or controlling someone's emails, text messages, or social media accounts
- Threats to kill or harm
- Harassment and stalking.

In marriage, domestic abuse occurs when one spouse seeks to dominate the other through a pattern of punishing behaviours. This can also be referred to under the biblical category of oppression that speaks to the domination involved.

The tactics used by an oppressive spouse can vary. They can be behaviours that prevent personal freedoms, induce fear, exploit, terrorise, humiliate, withhold resources, isolate, threaten, demand obedience or physically harm. Living under such evils harms the oppressed person's emotional, spiritual, physical, sexual, relational, and economic wellbeing.

'Toxic Masculinity'

People often use the term 'toxic masculinity' to describe exaggerated masculine traits that many cultures have widely accepted or glorified. This harmful concept of masculinity also places significant importance on 'manliness' based on:

- strength
- self-sufficiency
- sexual virility
- lack of emotion
- dominance

This perception is often reflected in aspects of popular culture such as music, film, and sport, which in turn can serve to support and reinforce these ideals. Over-emphasising these traits can include:

- aggression
- needing to dominate or control others
- low empathy
- sexual aggression or control
- a tendency towards or glorification of violence
- entitlement
- showing no emotion or suppressing emotions
- isolation
- chauvinism and sexism
- hyper-competitiveness

Abuse and the misuse of power

Abuse is basically the misuse of power by an abuser. This brings harm to those who are unable to protect themselves in the relationship. This power over others may be rooted in physical strength, but it may also arise from social factors such as age, gender, position, social security or wealth.

Hidden Weapon of Domestic Abuse," CCEF, April 22, 2021, <https://www.ccef.org/words-a-hidden-weapon-of-domestic-abuse/>.

⁷ The UK government defines domestic abuse as: "any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse"

Social norms and beliefs can reinforce or legitimise the use of power that one individual or group exercises towards, or over, another. Beliefs about other groups and their role or place in society can become 'false narratives' or 'basic assumptions' that govern our behaviour towards them – consciously or unconsciously.

The resistance or perceived failure to live up to or comply with these expectations can be met with force (emotional, psychological, or physical) with individuals subjected to harsh, abusive or manipulative treatment in order to gain compliance. This compliance always serves to reinforce the position of the abuser.

Sadly, these dynamics are often deeply engrained in family and community life, including the church.

Raising Awareness

One of the difficulties with domestic abuse is that it is often hidden; it can become so much part of 'normal' life that the abused person doesn't know they are being abused. This means that it can take some time to build trust with others before the abuse is disclosed.

The first way we can prepare ourselves to engage with these issues in a church/or pastoral setting is by growing in awareness about the verbal and non-verbal signs of abuse.

Domestic abuse often follows a pattern.

1. **Tension builds.** The abuser uses different tactics to keep the survivor on edge and wondering what is wrong; making them feel fearful and concerned. The survivor feels a deep need to placate the abuser.
2. **An abuse incident occurs.**
3. **A reconciliation phase.** At this stage the abuser says sorry, deflects responsibility or denies anything happened. They may also deny the severity of the incident and promise that it won't happen again.
4. **A period of calm follows**, where the incident is "forgotten" and no abuse takes place. Sometimes the abuser may do things like buy gifts to regain status and power.
5. **Repeat.** The cycle then repeats itself.

Domestic Abuse and Children

The Domestic Abuse Act recognises that a child who sees, hears, or experiences the effects of domestic abuse and is related to the victim or the suspect is also to be regarded as a victim.

The physical, psychological, and emotional effects on children because of exposure to domestic abuse can be severe and long-lasting.⁸ Some children may become withdrawn and find it difficult to communicate, others may act out the aggression they have witnessed or blame themselves for the abuse.

Survivors in Church Communities

Given the prevalence of domestic abuse in society, it is unsurprising that these issues affect people within the Christian church.

It is important to emphasise that faith and scripture cannot, under any circumstances, be used to justify, excuse or deflect responsibility for abuse. A priority on relationships, family and marriage in church can make it difficult to tell others that things are bad at home. Individuals may also feel that they are 'letting the church down' or 'failing' in some way.

We must acknowledge that Christian teaching has sometimes been used by abuser to permit their actions. For example, perpetrators can use the "sanctity" and permanence of marriage as a lever to maintain an abusive relationship. As a consequence, survivors can feel immense guilt for breaking off the marriage and may stay longer in abusive relationships because of this. This can be reinforced by their church's teaching on divorce, re-marriage or forgiveness.

This means that the social norms and beliefs in the Christian community may at times be complicit in allowing abuse of many kinds go unchallenged and may normalise behaviours that should not be happening at all. Many people who identify as LGBT+ often feel additional barriers to disclosure and feel unable to seek support if they are in an abusive same-sex relationship.

⁸ Children pick up signs and can feel tension at a young age; and they can learn coping behaviours. They often do not have the maturity to deal with what is going on around them or how to process it. This can result in children developing behavioural problems during childhood, making it difficult to form positive relationships into adulthood.

Supporting healthy relationships

The church is called to embody, and by God's grace develop, loving and just relationships. This means living out the Gospel in word and action; a sustaining spirituality rooted in the language and shared experience of God's love in Christ.

In practice, this should include using words to build others up, practising empathy, using power to protect the vulnerable, and creating a healthy culture where positive relationships include permission to talk about struggles, difficulties, and to disclose experiences of abuse in the home environment.

We do this in the hope that many who participate or connect with the Christian community can find safety, healing and restoration. We can support the ministry of the church by teaching and modelling healthy relationships. This includes:

- Non-threatening behaviour towards all others
- Mutual respect for people's right to feelings, friends, activities and opinions
- Honesty and accountability in accepting responsibility, admitting wrong and communicating truthfully.
- Responsible parenting with shared responsibilities and being a positive role model
- Shared partnership in the distribution of work, decisions and finances
- Seeking mutually satisfying resolutions to conflict and being willing to compromise.

Direct Intervention: Starting a conversation

If you ask someone about their wellbeing, they are more likely to admit that something is wrong than if you wait for them to say something. People are also much more likely to confide in a friend, or someone close to them, than they are to their pastor, the police or professional services. In that case:

- Always have the conversation face-to-face. Make sure you are in a safe space, won't be interrupted or overheard, and have enough time to have the conversation.
- Approach the subject with obvious kindness and concern. Let them know you are there to help and support them.
- Start by asking how things are in their relationship, or mention things you have noticed in their behaviour or that of the abuser. For example, we haven't seen much of you recently, is everything ok? I've noticed you seem a bit down, has anyone upset you?

These simple questions and your concern can be enough to give them the confidence to begin to disclose what they are experiencing at home.

Direct Intervention: Handling Disclosure

The 4R's are a useful way to remember how to respond to the disclosure of abuse.

Recognise

- Accept and take seriously what is being said, without displaying shock or disbelief.
- Let the person tell their story and don't push for information or ask leading questions.
- Do not interrogate them or decide if they are telling the truth.
- Be alert to signs and symptoms of abuse.

Respond

- Reassure the individual that they have taken the right step in sharing this information and that they are not to blame.
- Be honest; never make promises to keep what you are being told confidential. If abuse is involved, you will need to tell someone.
- Tell them what you will do with the information they have shared, and that they will be kept informed.
- Do not introduce personal information from either your own experience or that of others.
- Do not investigate the matter any further yourself, nor approach the person about whom allegations may have been made.

Record

Write down, concisely, exactly what was seen, said or heard, and make clear where you have added your own views or interpretation. Remember that this is your information, and that you are responsible for passing it on to the person with safeguarding responsibility. Be mindful that your written comments may be needed in the event that further legal or disciplinary action is taken.

You may find it helpful to use the 4 W's, as follows:

- WHO was involved? Name the key people.
- WHAT happened? Facts not opinions.
- WHEN did it happen? Date and time.
- WHO have you referred the issue on to?

Only pass the information on verbally if it is an emergency situation. Even so, you must also find time as soon as possible to write it down and send it on to the relevant person.

Refer

- Pass the information to the Safeguarding Lead or Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor in your setting within 24 hours. If you are unsure about the person's consent and confidentiality, you can get advice from your Parish Safeguarding Officer without necessarily disclosing people's names.
- In case of an emergency call the Police or dial 999.

Direct Intervention: Helping someone leave an abusive relationship

Escaping or leaving a domestic abusive relationship can be incredibly dangerous and professional help is almost certainly required. Do not act alone.

Women are at the greatest risk of murder at the point of separation because a violent partner may feel like they have lost control and may resort to more extreme measures to regain that control. The fear that women feel is very real.

People who have escaped from abusive relationships often say how helpful it was to get practical support from people they know. It is important not to judge, or to remove/withdraw support, even if the victim appears to reject the support, and is extremely protective of the perpetrator. We need to recognise that this is a survival strategy.

Here are some ways you might help:

- Storing an emergency bag for them, containing items such as their passport, birth certificate, medication, spare keys, clothes, toys for the children
- Being with them when they call helplines or support services
- Going with them to appointments

Policy Statement

All forms of domestic abuse are wrong and must stop. We are committed to promoting and supporting environments which:

- Ensure that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse
- Protect those vulnerable to domestic abuse from actual or potential harm
- Recognise equality amongst people and within relationships
- Enable and encourage concerns to be raised and responded to appropriately and consistently.

We recognise that:

- All forms of domestic abuse cause damage to the survivor and express an imbalance of power and relationship
- All survivors (regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity) have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- Domestic abuse can occur in all communities
- Domestic abuse may be a single incident, but is usually a systematic, repeated pattern which escalates in severity and frequency
- Domestic abuse, if witnessed or overheard by a child, is a form of abuse by the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour
- Working in partnership with children, adults and other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of any child or adult suffering abuse.

We will endeavour to respond to domestic abuse by:

In our response to abuse

- Giving priority to the safeguarding of the abused person

- Responding quickly to concerns or allegations with a clear safety plan
- Ensuring their wellbeing is of primary importance and they are removed from harm's way

In all our activities

- Valuing, listening to and respecting both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse
- Teaching and preaching against all forms of abuse and oppression and calling God's people to pursue holiness, seek justice, and offer compassion to those in need.

In our publicity

- Raising awareness about other agencies, support services, resources and expertise, through providing information in public and women-only areas of relevance to survivors, children and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse
- Providing resources and training where they are needed.

When concerns are raised

- Ensuring that those who have experienced abuse can find safety and informed help
- Working with the appropriate statutory bodies during an investigation into domestic abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the church community.

In our care

- Ensuring that informed and appropriate pastoral care is offered to any child, young person or adult who has suffered abuse
- Identifying and outlining the appropriate relationship of those with pastoral care responsibilities with both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

What to do if you receive an allegation or suspect Domestic Abuse:

If you suspect, or any allegation is made to you (by a child or an adult), that some form of abuse has taken place (whether in the context of a Church activity or elsewhere), please contact one of the 'responsible persons' listed above as soon as possible. In normal circumstances those nearer the top of the list should be approached first. However, if one or more of the individuals is implicated in the suspicion or allegation, please contact one of the other 'responsible persons'. If all are implicated, you will need to contact a responsible external agency.

The action the 'responsible person' will take depends on the exact nature of the suspicion or allegation. In all cases they will:

- Ascertain from you the precise details of the allegation or suspicion (they may ask you to fill out an 'incident report' form)
- Inform the other 'responsible persons' listed above
- Keep a written record of information collected and decisions made using the 'incident report' form.
- Refer it to the Incumbent and/or Parish Safeguarding Officer and the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser
- If it is urgent contact the relevant external agency for advice, ensure that the Incumbent and the Parish Safeguarding Officer are informed that this has been done.
- *In the case of physical assault they will also ensure that medical attention has been received and the police have been alerted.*

If you are not satisfied with the action that has been taken, then you retain a responsibility as a member of the public to report serious matters to the Police and should do so without hesitation.

External Agencies

- National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247
- Legal support (National Centre for Domestic Violence): 0844 8044 999 (provides a free, fast, emergency injunction service for victims of domestic abuse)
- Male victims (Respect): 0808 801 0327
- Helpline for domestic abuse in same sex relationships: 0800 999 5428

Appendix A: Policy Statement on the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders

As an organisation assessing applicants' suitability for positions which are included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order using criminal record checks processed through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), the PCC:

- a. complies fully with the [DBS Code of Practice](#) and undertakes to treat all applicants for voluntary or paid positions fairly.
- b. undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a criminal record check on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.
- c. can only ask an individual to provide details of convictions and cautions that the churches are legally entitled to know about. Where a DBS certificate at either standard or enhanced level can legally be requested (where the position is one that is included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 as amended, and where appropriate Police Act Regulations as amended).
- d. can only ask an individual about convictions and cautions that are not protected.
- e. is committed to the fair treatment of its staff, potential staff or users of its services, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependants, age, physical/mental disability or offending background.
- f. has a written policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders, which is made available to all DBS applicants at the start of the recruitment process.
- g. actively promotes equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records.
- h. selects all candidates for interview based on their skills, qualifications and experience.
- i. only submits an application for a criminal record check to the DBS after a thorough risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned. For those positions where a criminal record check is identified as necessary, all application forms, job adverts, and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that an application for a DBS certificate will be submitted in the event of the individual being offered the position.
- j. ensures that all those who are involved in its recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences, and that they have received appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders, e.g., the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- k. ensures that at interview, or in a separate discussion, an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.
- l. makes every subject of a criminal record check submitted to DBS aware of the existence of the [code of practice](#) and makes a copy available on request.
- m. undertakes to discuss any matter revealed on a DBS certificate with the individual seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.

Further information regarding conviction information

On the 29 May 2013, legislation came into force that allows certain old and minor cautions and convictions to no longer be subject to disclosure. In addition, employers will no longer be able to take an individual's old and minor cautions and convictions into account when making decisions.

All cautions and convictions for specified serious violent and sexual offences, and other specified offences of relevance for posts concerned with safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, will remain subject to

disclosure. In addition, all convictions resulting in a custodial sentence, whether or not suspended, will remain subject to disclosure, as will all convictions where an individual has more than one conviction recorded.⁹

Further guidance for applicants:

Any applicants may find guidance and criteria on the UK Government Disclosure and Barring Service website which explains the filtering of old and minor cautions and convictions which are now 'protected' so not subject to disclosure to employers. This can be found at www.gov.uk/government/collections/dbs-filtering-guidance

⁹ See Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2013; and Police Act 1997 (Criminal Record Certificates: Relevant Matters) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2013 See Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2013; and Police Act 1997 (Criminal Record Certificates: Relevant Matters) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2013.

Appendix B: Policy Statement on Disabled Persons in the Church

Our aim is to welcome all people by making our building and worship accessible to everyone.

The PCC expect all church workers to commit themselves to respectful pastoral care for those disabled persons to whom we minister and to welcome and assist them as necessary.

Application of the Policy

- All areas of the Church are accessible to wheelchair users and those who may have difficulty walking. The churches can be accessed via a ramp and all the facilities are on one level
- The seating can be easily moved to provide space for wheelchair/walking frame etc. users in the churches
- The Church is fitted with a hearing induction loop for hearing aid users
- Large print service booklets/resources are available
- The toilet is accessible for disabled persons
- A wheelchair is available should it be required
- For those persons unable to attend the rail for Holy Communion, the bread and wine will be brought to where they are seated
- The Rectory is accessible via a ramp and fitted with an accessible toilet
- The PCC commit to providing any new facilities so far as is reasonably practicable.