



Vulnerable People Policy

All Saints' Church, Walsoken

Please refer to Document S&S_Doc_001 for all Safeguarding and Social requirements.

Specific Policy

This Safeguarding & Social (S&S) sub-policy gives guidance concerning vulnerable people at church.

The Vulnerable People Policy of All Saints' Church, Walsoken ensures adequate attention is given to the consequential pastoral issues concerning but not limited to.

- 1) Spiritual abuse.
- 2) Physical abuse.
- 3) Emotional or psychological abuse.
- 4) Financial or legal abuse.
- 5) Sexual abuse.
- 6) Abuse and neglect.

Vulnerable people are defined as "People aged under 18 or other individuals who may be unable to take care of themselves or are unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation".

While all people must be protected from harm, there are additional legislative and ethical considerations for protecting vulnerable people. Vulnerable people can include:

- 1) Children.
- 2) Seniors.
- 3) People with impaired intellectual or physical functioning.
- 4) People from a low socio-economic background.
- 5) People who are not native English speakers.
- 6) People with low levels of literacy or education.
- 7) People subject to modern slavery, which involves human exploitation and control, such as forced labour, debt bondage, human trafficking, and child labour.

Reference Documents

Responding Well: A guide to support for victims and survivors of church-based abuse (Church of England)

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Promoting a Safer Church (Church of England).

The Equality Act (2010) legislation.

Safeguarding (Code of Practice) Measure 2021

Procedure

Considerations in the Pastoral Care of Vulnerable People

In church life, the boundaries between church work and private life can be difficult to distinguish clearly. These guidelines are not for application to informal friendships arising from church membership, but rather to relationships formed when pastoral services or visits are more formally offered or agreed by (or on behalf of) the church. These pastoral visits must be prearranged with the incumbent and recorded.

Most parishes are likely to have amongst their congregation children and young people who have been abused and/or adults who have experienced abuse, either as adults or when they themselves were children.

Informal friendship visits must never be communicated as "authorised", "agreed" or "sanctioned" etc. by the church.

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Pastoral care embraces a wide range of activity in support of one another in and beyond the Church. It might include.

- 1) Listening.
- 2) Encouraging.
- 3) Practical help.
- 4) Prayer.

It might involve.

- 1) Sustaining others through prolonged difficulty.
- 2) Offering guidance about other resources and perspectives.
- 3) Engaging with the journey of healing and wholeness.
- 4) Considering the process of reconciliation with God, church, self and others.

It might be offered.

- 1) Formally by the PCC or by the clergy.
- 2) Informally in everyday relationships.
- 3) By individuals.
- 4) By small groups.
- 5) Through a particular ministry.
- 6) Through outreach and mission.
- 7) By one church or a group of churches.
- 8) In the church setting.
- 9) In other settings

For Pastoral Care Agreed with the Incumbent (appropriate boundaries)

- 1) Where possible, arrange visits to a person's home beforehand rather than 'cold calling'.
- 2) Make clear from the outset what is being offered (e.g. bereavement counselling) and discuss with the person how s/he would like to be supported, within the structure of the service offered.
- 3) Consider carrying some form of identity that links you to the church so that the vulnerable person can, if they wish, check you out before letting you in to their home.
- 4) On a home visit, consider leaving a card, or such, with your name, role and contact number so that the person, or their carer, knows who you are and how to contact you.
- 5) Respect a person's independence. Always knock before entering a person's room or home; consider the appropriateness of initiating or receiving physical contact when greeting or leaving someone.
- 6) Do not assume that the use of first names rather than the formal Mr/Mrs etc. is acceptable; always ask.
- 7) Someone who lacks capacity to act for him/herself in one area of life may nonetheless be quite capable in other areas; ensure participation and inclusion wherever it is possible. Remember also that, as the Mental Capacity Act makes clear, every adult who has capacity retains the right to make decisions that others may deem to be foolish.
- 8) In conversation, consider the appropriate level of language for the needs of the vulnerable person and be aware of any special difficulties e.g. use of hearing aids, speech impediment, age or learning disability. Where communication skills are impaired, ask the person if he or she is comfortable involving a member of the family or a friend to help communication, and let the person choose who this should be.
- 9) Where you are seeking to find out the views of a person, or you are asking him or her to make a choice, offer clear unbiased choices and allow the person time to consider and express a decision.
- 10) Respect the person's right to personal space and privacy. Consideration should be given when assisting someone to use the toilet; balance the need for physical assistance with the need for dignity and privacy, and involve the person in any decision to either assist or to leave a door unlocked etc.
- 11) Consider the potential difficulties of home visits and discuss with other how risks to the vulnerable person, and to the visitor(s) can be minimised.
- 12) Be sensitive to a person's own beliefs and faith; do not try to persuade the person to adopt your own views.

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- 13) When dealing with financial affairs, be very cautious. Honesty, integrity and transparency are all vital. Do not engage in any activity that involves a personal financial gain; do not canvass for church donations from those who may be vulnerable, e.g. the recently bereaved.
- 14) Do not accept personal gifts, other than very small unsolicited tokens of thanks or birthday/Christmas gifts that are of low value (typically a £10 limit). Tell a church officer about any personal gift, even a small one. Where refusal of a gift may offend the gift must be submitted to church funds via raffle etc.
- 15) Be sensitive to any signs of a developing dependency upon you that might be inappropriate, especially where the person's vulnerability has arisen in a time of personal crisis. Where you feel an inappropriate attachment might be forming, seek advice from an appropriate source (e.g. the incumbent may be able to offer support).
- 16) If ever you feel that you are moving out of your depth in a relationship with a vulnerable person, or you do not feel competent to deal with a developing situation, step back and seek advice. Make sure you know your routes to support if you are in difficulty.

Support for Victims and Survivors of Abuse

If you are a victim or survivor of church-based abuse, or if you are concerned that someone is experiencing or has experienced abuse in a church setting, this is the support you can expect from the Church of England.

- 1) **Therapeutic support:** We will enable you to access therapeutic support to address your emotional and mental health needs.
- 2) **A support person:** A Support Person can help you by listening, showing compassion and liaising with the Church on your behalf.
- 3) **Spiritual and pastoral support:** You may find it difficult to deal with the impact that the abuse has had on your faith, spirituality or the relationship with your faith community.
- 4) **An apology:** We will apologise for our failings.
- 5) **Safe Spaces:** Safe Spaces is a free support service for victims and survivors aged over 18, which provides confidential, personal and safe advice (through a helpline, chat service and website)
- 6) **Interim Support Scheme:** This is a scheme intended to provide support for the urgent and immediate needs of victims and survivors of either current or non-recent church-based abuse, whose life circumstances are significantly affected by the abuse suffered and the response to it.
- 7) **Redress Scheme:** The scheme will consider the best ways to deliver financial compensation, therapeutic and pastoral support, and apology for victims and survivors.

Information for Victims and Survivors

The following information will be openly available either in our church or on our webpage, as a minimum.

- 1) Promoting a safer church poster.
- 2) A Safe Spaces poster.
- 3) Childline contact information.
- 4) Safeguarding who's who
- 5) Raising a Concern
- 6) Reporting Concerns of Abuse

Lone Working with Children or Vulnerable Adults

All volunteers should avoid working alone if it is not necessary, and work with others where possible, however, if this is not feasible, they should be aware of the importance of personal safety and take all reasonable precautions to safeguard themselves from harm, as they would in any other circumstances.

The PCC is responsible for ensuring that all lone working activities within the church are formally identified, and appropriate risk assessments are undertaken to identify and reduce the risks which lone working presents. In drawing up and recording an assessment of risk, issues such as the place of meeting, security, the risk of violence and the nature of the task or activity should be considered alongside any other factors appropriate to the circumstances.

All risks identified to volunteers arising from lone working must be recorded, in accordance with requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker, consideration should be given by the church to undertake other arrangements to complete the task or activity, such as ensuring individuals work in pairs

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No volunteer should ever plan to be alone on church premises with children or young people. However, if they should find themselves in this situation, it is important that another adult is made aware immediately. The volunteer should also assess the risks involved in sending the child or young person home, against the risk and vulnerability of being alone with them.

Consider how lone volunteer will raise the alarm if necessary, and ensure there are means of communicating with others in the event a problem arises.

Promoting a Healthy and Safe culture

Creating a healthy culture

Creating a healthy organisational culture is an essential part of safeguarding, facilitating victims and survivors of abuse to come forward and encouraging reporting of behaviours which are of concern. A healthy culture involves how people treat each other and talk to each other, and whether these interactions are positive and affirming or negative and destructive. Healthy church cultures are compassionate and caring, open to challenge, and transparent. Unhealthy cultures are closed, critical and can generate fear or apathy. Given the acute sense of vulnerability that victims and survivors will already feel, most will be reluctant to disclose their abuse in cultures that are, or appear to be, unhealthy.

The safer working practice "Musts" and "Must Nots" are given as appendix 1.

Communication patterns

- 1) The mode of communication adopted by people is "genuine dialogue", a respectful, person-centred exchange in which all people are open to being influenced, rather than "monologue disguised as dialogue."
- 2) There is encouragement and welcoming of different perspectives and views.
- 3) People do not feel they are "taking a risk" by expressing different views to other members of the community.
- 4) People do not have anxiety or fear about raising concerns.

Behaviour patterns

- 1) There is absence of coercive or controlling behaviour by ordained and non-ordained people and a "command and control" style of leadership.
- 2) "Poor behaviour" (e.g. bullying) is challenged and resolved when it occurs.
- 3) There is no evasion of responsibility to address difficult situations. For example, volunteers are not reallocated different roles when any safeguarding concerns are raised about them, and the matter is addressed.
- 4) Those involved in the community support each other through difficult times

Relationships

- 1) Power is shared and distributed instead of being vested in a few people.
- 2) Leadership styles are inclusive and consultative rather than controlling.
- 3) There are no powerful elites or cliques dominating the life and affairs of our church
- 4) Safe boundaries between people are understood and observed.
- 5) No one is isolated or left out of our church's life and activities.

Self-reflexivity

- 1) Collectively and individually, our church devotes time to reflect on their behaviours and relationships.
- 2) The tendency towards, and dangers of, clerical deference are acknowledged and actively guarded against.
- 3) People are aware of the impact they can have on others.
- 4) Feedback from others (for example, about communication style and behaviour) is welcomed.
- 5) Officers in the church learn from failures and reviews (in their own as well as in other organisations) and take appropriate actions to seek to prevent any recurrence.

Safer (acceptable) Touch Guidelines (appropriate boundaries)

All individuals within All Saints' Church, Walsoken are entitled to worship in an environment where they feel safe, secure and respected. Our church intends ensuring that no-one feels threatened or disrespected in terms of physical contact between themselves or another person.

Safer Touch guidance has the aim of ensuring that all clergy, officers and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities in terms of appropriate and inappropriate touch. This explains safer touch as well as raising awareness of the

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boundaries involving touch and how individuals may be affected by touch. Advice is provided on how to seek support should inappropriate touch occur or if an individual has a safeguarding concern.

It is crucial our Church considers the boundaries of appropriate touch to make sure that the physical contact which occurs in day-to-day interactions and worship is appropriate and ensures that all individuals feel safe. Sympathetic attention, encouragement and appropriate physical contact are needed by children and adults. However, abusers can use touch to 'normalise' physical contact which then becomes abusive. Touch should never be invasive, humiliating or flirtatious. All clergy, Officers, and volunteers should remain vigilant regarding the behaviour of others and contribute to creating an environment which makes it challenging for individuals to use touch, which is abusive, invasive and traumatising. It is also important to recognise that this guidance co-exists alongside an individual person's boundaries to touch and does not over-ride the right that all have to autonomy over their own body.

All clergy, officers, and volunteers are responsible to

- 1) Understand and maintain an awareness of the boundaries involving physical contact.
- 2) Ensure that they engage in touch only if/when necessary or appropriate to do so.
- 3) Ensure that no person feels threatened or unsafe at a church because of inappropriate touch.
- 4) Create and promote a culture in which an individual's wishes and feelings regarding touch are respected.
- 5) Ensure touch is consensual.

General guidelines for safe touch

- 1) In most situations it is appropriate to ask if you can touch someone. This may for example be requesting if they are happy for you to straighten their tie or brush an insect off their sleeve.
- 2) It is crucial that individuals consider where they are touching an individual and whether it may be construed as sexual, abusive, offensive or inappropriate.
- 3) Individuals must maintain an awareness that some people may actively dislike touch and being touched may be traumatic for them. This may particularly be the case for survivors of abuse or those with sensory sensitivities.
- 4) When discussing touch with a larger group of people, it is advisable to pre-empt issues and agree a signal which indicates they do not wish to be touched. This helps to create a culture where respect for an individual's preference is upheld.
- 5) Generally, the use of touch between adults in positions of responsibility and those with whom they are working or volunteering should be kept to the minimum.

Safer touch with adults

Adults generally have capacity to consent to touch. It is everyone's responsibility to create an environment where people feel able to decline touch. On occasions, some adults may require physical and mental support, therefore:

- 1) Individuals can allow people to hold or link arms to help with walking or stability.
- 2) People should be discouraged from touching each other's faces, torso and legs.
- 3) Individuals should discourage others from sitting on their lap and instead offer to sit side by side.
- 4) When considering hugging, always ask permission. Be mindful of your body position and keep it public. A hug in the context of a group can be perceived differently to a hug behind closed doors.
- 5) Avoid touch if the person needing support is very distressed as they may be unlikely to tolerate it.
- 6) In some roles, such as pastoral ministry, touch of the hands or the forearm may be appropriate when supporting the elderly, ill or those experiencing loneliness.
- 7) Awareness should be maintained around consent and that this may change between occurrences.

Safer touch with children:

Some physical contact with children, particularly younger children, can be appropriate in supporting their emotional and physical needs, or to prevent risk of injury. The following guidelines regarding touching are suggested.

- 1) Touch should be in response to a child's needs and not related to the volunteer's needs. It should be age appropriate, welcoming and generally initiated by the child, not the adult.
- 2) Individuals should respond warmly to a child who needs comforting but make sure there are other adults around.

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- 3) Allow the child to determine the degree of physical contact with others except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. when they need medical attention).
- 4) Care should be taken if younger children wish to sit on your lap and individuals should be aware of their body position. Older children should be discouraged from sitting on laps and you can offer to sit side by side.
- 5) There may be times when a young child may need physical guiding. In these situations, it may be appropriate to hold their hand.
- 6) Individuals should ensure that the child and parents/carers are aware of any activity that requires physical contact and of its nature before the activity takes place, with parental consent and child assent obtained in advance.
- 7) Activities such as play fighting are not appropriate as they may blur boundaries between adults in supportive roles and children in their care. They may also act as a cover for abusive practices.
- 8) Supervising adults should maintain an awareness of inappropriate behaviours between children including inappropriate touch which may indicate issues of child-on-child abuse. It is important to note that parents/carers should be allowed to meet the care needs of their child without needing to follow these safer touch procedures (such as nappy changing). However, if you have a safeguarding concern about the relationship between a parent/close family member and a child, please do refer to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team through the routes described at the end of this guidance.

Safer touch and emergency situations or first aid:

It is crucial that the chance of accidents is minimised through careful risk management and de-escalation of incidents. However, there may be times in emergency situations where quick reactions are required to prevent an accident or for the administration of emergency first aid, where permission to touch cannot be obtained in the moment. Typical situations may entail:

- 1) Catching someone's arm to prevent them falling.
- 2) Moving someone quickly to prevent them being hit by a falling object or another person.
- 3) Providing emergency first aid where someone is bleeding heavily or is unconscious.
- 4) Preventing a child running out into a road.
- 5) Preventing someone from harming themselves or others.
- 6) Removing or guiding someone from a room or building.
- 7) Should you suddenly need to touch or move a person quickly for their own safety, it is important to explain to the person why you took the action you did and check that they are not injured.

Annual Review of Church Activities

As a minimum this should be included in the church annual report along with a report on safeguarding.

Forms

None

Diagrams

None

Appendices

Appendix 1. Safer working Practice

All those working on behalf of the parish with children, young people and adults

Must:

- 1) Treat all individuals with respect and dignity.
- 2) Ensure that their own language, tone of voice, and body language is respectful.
- 3) Ensure that children, young people and adults know who they can talk to about a personal concern.
- 4) Record and report any concerns about a child, young person or adult and/or the behaviour of another worker with their activity leader and/or Parish Safeguarding Officer. Sign and date the record.
- 5) Obtain written consent for any photographs/videos to be taken, shown, displayed or stored.
- 6) Administer any First Aid with others around.

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In addition, for children and young people, must:

- 1) Always aim to work with or within sight of another adult.
- 2) Ensure another adult is informed if a child needs to be taken to the toilet. Toilet breaks should be organised for young children.
- 3) Respond warmly to a child who needs comforting but make sure there are other adults around.
- 4) Ensure that the child and parents are aware of any activity that requires physical contact and its nature before the activity takes place.

Must not:

- 1) Invade an individual's privacy whilst washing and toileting.
- 2) Use any form of physical punishment.
- 3) Be sexually suggestive about or to an individual.
- 4) Scapegoat, ridicule or reject an individual or group.
- 5) Permit abusive peer activities e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying.
- 6) Show favouritism to any one individual or group.
- 7) Allow an individual to involve you in excessive attention seeking.
- 8) Allow unknown adults access to children, young people and adults that may be vulnerable. Visitors should always be accompanied by an approved person.
- 9) Allow strangers to give children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable in the group, lifts.
- 10) Befriend children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable on social media.
- 11) Take photographs on personal phones or cameras as this means that images are stored on personal devices.

In addition, for children and young people, must not:

- 1) Give lifts to children you are supervising, on their own or your own (unless there are exceptional circumstances e.g. in an emergency for medical reasons or where parents fail to collect a child and no other arrangements can be made to take a child home. In such situations, the circumstances and your decision must be recorded and shared with an appropriate person at the earliest opportunity).
- 2) Smoke or drink alcohol in the presence of children and young people.
- 3) Arrange social occasions with children and young people (other than events which also include adult family members/carers) outside organised group occasions