

Polesworth Abbey

Policy on Safeguarding Adults June 2019

This policy, adopted by Polesworth Abbey PCC, will be reviewed each year.

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

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

Safeguarding Adults - Understanding, Adopting and Implementing the Policy

Guidelines for Those in Positions of Trust or Exercising Pastoral Ministry with Vulnerable People

Many dioceses have produced helpful guidance for the professional conduct of clergy and lay people. The Convocations of York and Canterbury have also produced *Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy*.

All those involved in pastoral ministry, whether paid or unpaid, clergy or lay, should be working within this or a similar set of guidelines. Following such guidelines should not only protect vulnerable people but also ensure that workers are not wrongly accused of abuse or misconduct.

Pastoral Relationships

Exercising any kind of ministry involves workers developing an understanding of themselves and how they relate to others, how they increase the well-being of others and how they ensure their own well-being and safety. People in positions of trust necessarily have power, although this may not be apparent to them, therefore respecting professional boundaries is particularly important. Many pastoral relationships can become intertwined with friendships and social contacts making this guidance even more necessary.

- Church workers should exercise particular care when ministering to persons with whom they have a close personal friendship or family relationship.
- Church workers should be aware of the dangers of dependency in pastoral and professional relationships and seek advice or supervision when these concerns arise.
- Church workers who exercise a healing ministry should be trained in the theology and non-intrusive practice of that work.
- Church workers should recognize their limits and not undertake any ministry that is beyond their competence or role (for example therapeutic counselling, deliverance ministry, counselling victims of abuse and domestic violence, or their perpetrators or giving legal advice.) In such instances the person should be referred to another person or agency with appropriate expertise.
- Church workers should avoid behaviour that could give the impression of inappropriate favouritism or the encouragement of inappropriate special relationships.

- Church workers should treat those with whom they minister or visit with respect, encouraging self-determination, independence and choice.
- Care should be taken when helping with physical needs, washing and toileting, always respecting the choices of the individual concerned.
- Pastoral relationships may develop into romantic attachments and such situations should be handled sensitively. Workers need to recognize such a development and make it clear to both the person concerned and a supervisor or colleague. Alternative arrangements should be made for the ongoing pastoral care of the person concerned.
- Church workers should not undertake any pastoral ministry while they are under the influence of drink or non-prescribed drugs.

Conversations and Interviews in a Ministry Context

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

The church workers should consider in advance:

- The place of the meeting, arrangement of the furniture and lighting, the worker's dress;
- The balance of privacy for conversation with the opportunity for supervision (open doors or windows in doors, another person nearby);
- The physical distance between people determined by hospitality and respect, being aware that someone may have suffered abuse or harassment in the past;
- Whether the circumstances suggest a professional or social interaction;
- The propriety or danger of visiting or being visited alone, especially in the evening; and the personal safety and comfort of all participants;
- Establishing at the outset the nature of the interview in respect to subject matter, confidentiality and duration;
- The appropriateness of initiating or receiving any physical contact, for example gestures of comfort, which may be unwanted or misinterpreted.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing with regard to Vulnerable Adults

Both law and sound morals impose a general duty not to pass on information which has been received in the clear expectation that it will be treated as confidential. That duty is not absolute, however, and the courts will not intervene to restrain disclosure where

- (a) the information relates to a crime or other serious misconduct and
- (b) disclosure is in the public interest.

Thus, where a vulnerable person or victim is judged to be at risk of significant harm or an adult is likely to harm themselves or others, usually it will be legally possible, appropriate and highly desirable to disclose relevant information to the public authorities for the sake of protecting that vulnerable person. If such information has been received in confidence, the person giving the information should in the first instance be encouraged to disclose it to the authorities him or herself. Alternatively, the person receiving the disclosure should ask permission to pass the information on. If this request is denied it might still be possible to pass the information to a statutory body.

Government guidance relating to child protection issued in 2003 gives helpful advice, which is also relevant in the context of the protection of vulnerable adults. These matters are dealt with fully in God's Children: Our Diocese chapter 2.11 pp15 -17 under the following headings-

- Disclosure in the absence of consent
- Confession
- Relevant legislation
- Data protection
- Human rights

Record Keeping and Privacy

- Church workers should consider keeping a daily record of pastoral encounters to include date, time, place, subject and actions to be taken. The content of any encounter should only be recorded with the person's consent unless it is a matter of child protection or might be a record of suspicion of abuse or mistreatment.
- Any record should be factual and avoid rumour or opinion.
- Records concerned with abuse should be kept indefinitely (at least 50 years).

Working with colleagues

The standards maintained within a pastoral relationship are equally relevant in relationships with colleagues. Harassment or bullying should never be condoned. All workers need to be aware of the possibility of stress within the work place. The needs of family should be acknowledged and all who work together should acknowledge the boundaries between work and home, allowing sufficient time for relaxation and holidays. Everyone who works with vulnerable people should know to whom they are accountable and have a designated person with whom to discuss their work.

- Church workers should be aware of the responsibilities, function and style of other church workers and encourage cooperation and consultation between workers in the tasks they do.
- Colleagues should not be discriminated against, harassed, bullied or abused for any reason.
- Colleagues should not be penalized for following this guidance or for taking action regarding others and this guidance.
- When leaving office or relinquishing any task church workers should relinquish any pastoral relationship except with the agreement of any successor.
- Church workers should know to whom they are accountable and be regularly mentored by them or another person who can assist. Such mentoring is especially necessary for those undertaking a continuing individual pastoral ministry of counselling, or when their ministry takes them outside normal church work.
- Church workers should ensure that their tasks can be carried out by another if they are ill or otherwise unable to fulfil their responsibilities.

Sexual conduct

The sexual conduct of church workers may have an impact on their ministry within the Church. It is never appropriate for workers to take advantage of their role and engage in sexual activity with anyone with whom they have a pastoral relationship. Workers should be aware of the power imbalance inherent in pastoral relationships.

- Church workers must not sexually abuse an adult or a child.
- Church workers must take responsibility for their words and actions if wishing to make physical contact with another adult (for example a hug may be misunderstood) or talk to them about sexual matters. This will include seeking permission, respecting the person's wishes, noticing and responding to non-verbal communication, refraining from such conduct if in doubt about the person's wishes.
- Church workers should follow the Church's discipline on sexual matters.
- Church workers must not view, possess or distribute sexual images of children and should refrain from viewing, possessing or distributing sexually exploitative images of adults.
- Church workers should avoid situations where they feel vulnerable to temptation or where their conduct may be misinterpreted.

Financial Integrity

Financial dealings can have an impact on the church and the community and must always be handled with integrity. Those with authority for such matters should maintain proper systems and not delegate that responsibility to anyone else.

- Church workers should not seek personal financial gain from their position beyond their salary or recognized allowances.
- Church workers should not be influenced by offers of money.
- Church workers should ensure that church and personal finances are kept apart and should avoid any conflict of interest.
- Money received by the church should be handled by two unrelated lay people.
- Any gifts received should be disclosed to a supervisor or colleague where it should be decided whether they should be accepted.
- Care should be taken not to canvass for church donations from those who may be vulnerable, e.g. the recently bereaved.

Behaviour outside Work and Christian Ministry

In church ministry behaviour outside work can often impinge on that ministry. Church workers are expected to uphold Christian values throughout their lives.

It is important to follow these guidelines to ensure good practice

If Church workers are suspected of mistreatment this will need to be referred to the Parish lead person and the Bishop's Adviser for Adult Safeguarding. If less serious matters are raised such as inappropriate behaviour or attitude not amounting to abuse, the worker's Parish lead person should approach the worker and discuss the concern with them with the aim of identifying ways of improving the situation. The worker should be informed that disciplinary proceedings might be brought if there is no improvement. People suffering from mistreatment may wish to make a complaint. This would need to be raised with the Bishop's Adviser for Adult Safeguarding.