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# PCC Policy on Working with Vulnerable Adults

## **Introduction:**

All adults can be vulnerable for a variety of reasons. Individuals often turn to the church when they are at their most vulnerable, and we must all be conscious how we should support these people as individuals and as a group.

This policy is designed to support adults regardless of why they might be vulnerable. Each individual and parish council member should read and understand the policy on the protection of vulnerable adults.

This policy has been accepted by the PCC of Holy Apostles and is reviewed annually.

## Contents

Introduction	1
Contents Page	2
<b>Section One: PCC Policy and Guidelines</b>	
Holy Apostles PCC Policy Statement for Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults	3
Guidelines Checklist for PCC's	4-7
Promoting good practice with external users of church premises	8
<b>Section Two: Guidelines for those in a Position of Trust</b>	
Pastoral Relationships	9
Conversations and interviews in a ministry context	9-10
Record keeping and privacy	10
Working with colleagues	10-11
Sexual conduct	11
Financial integrity	11
<b>Section Three: Definitions, Abuse Awareness and Response</b>	
Definition of Vulnerable Adult	12
Understanding Abuse in Vulnerable Adults	12-13
What to do if you become aware of abuse or concerns are raised	13-14
Key Contact	14
<b>Section Four: Additional Resources</b>	
Diocesan Policy for Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults	15-17
The National Church of England policy guidance : Promoting a Safe Church	18

## **Section One PCC Policy and Guidelines**

### **Holy Apostles PCC Policy Statement for Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults**

This statement was adopted by Holy Apostles Church, Cheltenham at a Parochial Church Council meeting held on .....(date).

This policy will be reviewed each year to monitor the progress which has been achieved and a copy shared with the Archdeacon at the time of the Visitation.

- i. 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.
- ii. As members of this parish we commit ourselves to respectful pastoral care for all adults to whom we minister.
- iii. We commit ourselves to the safeguarding of people who may be vulnerable, ensuring their well-being in the life of this church.
- iv. We commit ourselves to promoting safe practice by those in positions of trust.
- v. The parish commits itself to promoting the inclusion and empowerment of people who may be vulnerable.
- vi. 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.
- vii. We undertake to exercise proper care in the appointment and selection of those who will work with people who may be vulnerable.
- viii. The parish is committed to supporting, resourcing, training and regularly reviewing those who undertake work amongst people who may be vulnerable.
- ix. The parish adopts the guidelines of the Church of England and the Diocese. (see p xx )
- x. Each person who works with vulnerable people will agree to abide by these recommendations and the guidelines established by this church.

Incumbent .....Date .....

Churchwarden ..... Churchwarden .....

## Guideline Checklist for PCCs

Every congregation needs to have in mind its care for all the people in its geographical parish. Everyone has a responsibility for the safety, well being and protection of others. In every congregation, many adults may experience greater or lesser degrees of vulnerability at different times. Christian communities should be places where all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse.

### Guideline 1:

The Parochial Church Council, together with the incumbent, carries a duty of care for the safety of those who attend or use the church. The Council should ensure that policies are in place that reflect the need to safeguard vulnerable people and that it is being implemented and has appropriate resources. The Council needs to find ways to communicate the policy to the whole congregation. Clergy in particular need to be aware of the pastoral needs of vulnerable people, their carers and those that work with them.

### Guideline 2:

The parish needs to consider how best to introduce, adopt and own a policy on safeguarding adults. In preparation for this the PCC may wish to work through the questions detailed below and examples of good and bad practice:

#### Key Questions to Consider:

With regard to our parish, who are the vulnerable people?

In what ways are they vulnerable?

In what settings in your parish do you meet vulnerable people?

Are there ways in which you can better safeguard the vulnerable adults that we meet in our parish?

#### Examples of good and poor practice to Consider:

<b>Good Practice</b>	<b>Poor Practice</b>
Being careful of our language. Always use positive language, for example, a person has a physical, mental or learning disability.	Maintaining a 'them' and 'us' divide in our attitudes, speech and actions. By not speaking to vulnerable adults as one would other adults or by only talking about 'them' without using individuals' names.

<b>Good Practice</b>	<b>Poor Practice</b>
Treat vulnerable adults with the same respect as you would when speaking to or about anyone else. Always refer to them by name, eg 'We must remember to save a seat so Bill can join in.'	By not speaking to or about vulnerable adults as one would to other adults. Grouping people together as if they are all the same increases unhelpful stereotyping and removes their individuality.
Use proper sign language for the deaf and for those with learning difficulties.	Using action songs as a substitute for signing is inappropriate. The 'actions' are not necessarily intelligible to deaf people or those with learning difficulties. They may be fun but actions don't use the words; they are also fine for children or as an aid to worship.
Make sure everyone can get to where the coffee is served and that they receive the necessary books or papers on arrival at church. Clear access to enable independence is always the preferred option, but remember to be available to offer help should it be needed.	Assuming that the person with a disability has no need of books, etc. Assuming that all disabled people have to be served and cannot help themselves or express a choice or preference.
Giving the same respect as to others Always knocking on the door before entering a room or home. Asking permission to join them; respecting their home and possessions.	Touching or moving personal possessions without permission. Many people rely on familiarity as navigation aids around their homes.
Respecting differences – be it in appearance, ability or ideas.	Attempting to change someone's appearance to a more acceptable style. Assuming that odd or challenging behaviour is a sign of demon possession. Imposing, 'ministry' on vulnerable adults without their informed permission. Assuming that everyone shares your Christian values.

Good Practice	Poor Practice
<p>Make sure that everyone has access to all the projected words, pictures and presentations by offering seating with a clear 'sight line' by, for example, offering seats near the front (if they are wanted). Have more than one screen for OHPs or PowerPoint presentations and ensure that the images are not adversely affected by light, or provide written copies.</p>	<p>Ignoring or excluding people from everyday events or special occasions either by not inviting them or by not making communication possible. Ignoring people that are below your eye-level by only taking to their companions who may be on your eye-level. Standing whilst talking to someone in a wheelchair assumes you are talking down to them (even if you aren't) and makes two way communication difficult.</p>
<p>Have a proper conversation using appropriate language. Ask about interests and hobbies.</p>	<p>Using euphemisms, irony and some jokes with some vulnerable adults can sometimes be misunderstood and your true meaning will not be grasped or it may be felt to be offensive. Just because someone has a disability it doesn't mean they can't hold an adult conversation with you – avoid using childish language.</p>
<p>Vulnerable adults sometimes welcome physical contact, but remember to ask first. Not withholding physical contact because someone has a disability.</p>	<p>Hugging people without asking can cause distress; people who have disabilities have preferences too. Leaving a disabled person out of 'hugging' or handshakes can be very rejecting and hurtful.</p>
<p>Check the building for accessibility. This doesn't only mean doors, steps and toilets, but also includes sight lines, lighting, acoustics, etc.</p>	<p>Failing to see that we all have similar needs.</p>
<p>Respect for dignity and feelings. Ask about personal preferences, forms or address and how much help might be needed.</p>	<p>Excluding vulnerable adults from events like funerals because, in your opinion, it may be upsetting. Assuming that help is needed all the time with everything.</p>

Good Practice	Poor Practice
Remember the needs of carers for breaks and short times apart (they may want to go the shops or the person cared for many welcome the chance to go shopping without their carer – it gives something different to talk about on return home).	Being insensitive or neglectful of the emotional needs of carers. Judging how they spend their time or money.

### Guideline 3:

The PCC together with the incumbent should ensure that DBS checks are obtained for people who fall into the following categories:

- Lay people commissioned by the Bishop for pastoral and community work
- All those who become parish lead people under a parish policy
- All lay people authorised in a formal way by the parish for pastoral and community work
- All those commissioned by the Bishop to distribute Holy Communion to people in their own homes
- According to the House of Bishops' policy, *'Those who regularly care for, train, supervise or are in sole charge of vulnerable people' (as described by the narrower definition)* should obtain a DBS check.

See PCC Policy on Safeguarding Children & Young People for guidance on Safer recruitment and DBS check procedures.

The implications of this are that many of those who work with adults in our churches do not come into the above categories, and so will not be able to be checked. In these cases, references should be taken with care. (*Promoting a Safe Church pp24,25*).

The Diocesan Human Resources Manager & Safeguarding Adviser at Church House, Judith Knight, can advise where there are any issues or concerns. She can be contacted on 01452 835526 or on email [jknight@glosdioc.org.uk](mailto:jknight@glosdioc.org.uk)

#### Guideline 4:

Promoting a safe church is key for the duty of care the church has to all who worship, visit, or use its premises.

- Church buildings should be inspected to ensure they meet Health and Safety standards and should allow people with physical disabilities to participate as much as possible.
- Parishes should undertake a regular audit of their buildings in order to ensure that premises enable the church to carry out its duties under the Disability Discrimination Acts. Issues of access, visibility, audibility and toilet facilities are among the issues that should be addressed.
- Appropriate public and employee insurance cover should be in place at all times.

## **Promoting good practice with external users of church premises**

Many community bodies use church premises for a variety of events, clubs and groups.

The church should ensure that all relevant signage such as emergency exits, power and lighting switches, fire extinguishers, and first aid are all accessible at all times and that user groups have the contact details for a responsible person/caretaker should there be any problems.

Whilst the church is not responsible for these independent groups, building relationships with representatives and leaders of these groups is key to ensuring that the church's commitment to the safety of all can be shared.

It is good practice for any external users to be asked to give assurances that they have their own policies and practices in place to ensure the safety of those in their care and for the activities they put on. This is especially important for activities with children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

In addition all external users should be able to provide evidence of current insurance cover for their own activities as part of any usage agreement.

A church may decide to agree to regular usage of its premises on the condition that an organisation is able to share a copy of their own current practices and policies. A church may also have in place an annual review to ensure that any organisation using their premises commits to such a review of their own policies and guidelines.

## **Section Two Guidelines for Those in Position of Trust**

Many dioceses have produced helpful guidance of 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.

<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1168846/guidelines%20for%20the%20professional%20conduct%20of%20the%20clergy.pdf>

### **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 other sand 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 recognise their limits and not undertake any ministry that is beyond their competence or role (eg 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.

## **Conversations and interviews in a ministry context**

Formal interviews and information conversations in a ministry context are pastoral encounters.

Church workers should be aware of their language and behaviour. For example, 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 worker 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.

## **Record keeping and privacy**

Church workers may want to keep an informal record of pastoral encounters. 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).

The publishing, sharing or keeping of personal data or images should follow the appropriate legislation.

## **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. 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.

When leaving office or relinquishing any task church workers should relinquish any pastoral relationship except with the agreement of any successor.

## **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 and their conduct should be of the highest standards at all times.

Church workers should avoid situations where they feel vulnerable to temptation or where their conduct may be misinterpreted.

Church workers must take responsibility for their words and actions if wishing to make physical contact with another adult (eg 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.

## **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 recognised 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 could be accepted.

Care should be taken not to canvass for church donations from those who may be vulnerable eg the recently bereaved.

## Section Three Definitions, Abuse Awareness and Response

### Definition of Vulnerable Adult

*What is understood by the term 'Vulnerable Adult'?*

The following is the definition of a vulnerable adult as set out in the House of Bishops' Report (*Promoting a Safe Church p2*):

***Any adult aged 18 or over who, by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation is permanently or for the time being unable to take care of him or herself, or to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.***

The phrase 'other situation' includes in the case of the Diocese of Gloucester those who are vulnerable for medical and social reasons and also those who are vulnerable by virtue of their economic position or their status under 'immigration' laws (for example, those who are asylum seekers or refugees).

Taking into account the breadth of the definition, it is probably the case that in a good proportion of congregations in the Diocese there are many people who can be considered vulnerable in some respects.

### Understanding Abuse with Vulnerable Adults

*What is Abuse, where can it happen and who could be abusing people living in your parish?*

'Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons.' (Human Rights Act)

*Abuse can take many different forms:*

**Physical abuse** – being hit or restrained, or misuse of medication

**Sexual abuse** – being harassed, teased or touched in a way that the person does not like, being forced to have sex against their will

**Neglect** – not getting the food, care or clothing needed

**Psychological abuse** – being bullied, threatened or verbally abused

**Discriminatory abuse** – being ridiculed or threatened because of race, gender, disability or age

**Financial abuse** – money or possession being stolen or used in a way that the person does not like

**Institutional abuse** – being mistreated by an organisation or person that is providing care

**Spiritual abuse** – Not defined in law. Can be caused by the inappropriate use of religious belief or practice, misuse of authority of leadership, oppressive teaching, and/or intrusive healing and deliverance ministries. Further guidance is available from the Diocese of Gloucester.

*Where can abuse happen?*

Abuse can happen anywhere, for example:

In the domestic home

While with family and friends

While receiving treatment

In a day centre

In a care home, residential home, nursing home

In hospital

In church

*Who could be abusing people who live in your parish?*

A partner (husband or wife)

A friend or relative

Someone employed to help look after a vulnerable person

Someone living in the same care home, hostel, housing scheme

Someone attending the same day activities or centre

A stranger

**What you should you do if you become aware or you are told that a vulnerable adult is being abused:**

- Do not dismiss your concerns
- If the person is in immediate danger call the police or an ambulance
- Keep any evidence, do not clear it away
- Do not confront the alleged abuser
- Report your concerns to the Nominated Person for Safeguarding, Candace Plouffe or the Incumbent, Rod Paterson (contact details below)
- Write a factual account of what you have heard or been told for future reference

You must never assume that somebody else will recognise and report what you have seen or heard.

## **What you should do if someone starts telling you they have been abused:**

- Listen very carefully; give them your full attention
- If the person is in immediate danger call the police or ambulance
- Do not agree to keep it a secret; you cannot do this. Explain to them you have to pass it on
- Reassure them you will deal with the allegation discreetly and will take it seriously
- Avoid asking questions about the alleged abuse
- Don't make judgements
- Do not confront the alleged abuser
- Report the allegation to the Nominated Person for Safeguarding, Candace Plouffe or the Incumbent, Rod Paterson and/or the Diocesan Human Resources Manager & Safeguarding Adviser, Judith Knight (contact details below)
- Write what you have been told for future reference
- If the Nominated person for Safeguarding or the Incumbent is implicated report it immediately to the Bishop or Archdeacon, by contacting Judith Knight, Diocesan Human Resources Manager & Safeguarding Advisor.

### **Key Contacts:**

Adult Social Care: 01452 426565

Nominated Person for Safeguarding: Candace Plouffe

Landline: 01242 583334

Mobile: 07986 666393

Email: [canplo@btinternet.com](mailto:canplo@btinternet.com)

Incumbent: Rod Paterson

Landline: 01242 512254

Email: [rod.paterson@holyapostles.org.uk](mailto:rod.paterson@holyapostles.org.uk)

The Diocesan Human Resources Manager & Safeguarding Advisor, Judith Knight, can advise where there are any issues or concerns.

Landline: 01452 835526

Email: [jknight@glosdioc.org.uk](mailto:jknight@glosdioc.org.uk)

## Section Four Additional Resources

### Diocesan Policy for Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

1. *Bishops Council - introduction to the policy*
  - 1.1 Bishop's Council has made a commitment to promoting good practice that takes account of the broad understanding of vulnerability, whilst also accepting that Disclosure and Barring Service disclosures only apply to a specified range of vulnerability (see below).
  - 1.2 Bishop's Council will champion and promote good practice that respects the rights of individuals to enjoy privacy, dignity, independence and choice and which actively promotes the empowerment and well-being of vulnerable people. This includes the right to live a life free from abuse and neglect.
  - 1.3 On this Christian basis, the Bishop's Council is committed create and maintain an organisational culture that is respectful, non abusive and which takes allegations of abuse seriously.
2. *Definitions of vulnerability*
  - 2.1 Vulnerability in adults takes many forms. The Bishop's Council accepts the working definition for use with those who may be vulnerable set out in the national Church of England report *Promoting a Safe Church*:
  - 2.2 "Any adult aged 18 or over whom, by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation or specific circumstance is permanently or for the time being unable to take care of him or herself, or to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation".
  - 2.3 The phrase "other situations" includes in the case of the Diocese of Gloucester those who are vulnerable for medical and social reasons and also those who are vulnerable by virtue of their economic position of their status under 'immigration' laws (for example those who are asylum seekers or refugees). Taking into account the breadth of the definition, it is probably the case that in a good proportion of congregations in the Diocese there are many people who could be considered vulnerable in some respects.

### 3. *Enabling responsibility*

3.1 The Bishop's Council supports **the overall approach** outlined in *Promoting a Safe Church*. This is based on enabling adults to be as responsible for themselves as it is practicable. It is the case that those who are most vulnerable are least able to report any abuse.

3.2 We believe that it is a Christian Duty to recognise and support those who are identified in being more vulnerable. Some of the factors that increase vulnerability include:

- a sensory or physical disability or impairment
- a learning disability
- a physical illness
- mental ill health (including dementia), chronic or acute
- an addiction of alcohol or drugs
- the failing faculties in old age
- a permanent or temporary reduction in physical, mental or emotional capacity brought about by life events, including bereavement, previous abuse or trauma, instability to economic or legal circumstances

3.3 We are committed to promoting activities and awareness which will help ensure that people are:

- treated with respect and dignity
- have their privacy respected
- are able to lead as independent a life as possible
- have the protection of the law
- have their rights upheld regardless of their ethnicity, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religion, or cultural background
- be able to engage in effective communication
- be heard

This will support parishes in ensuring that everyone is able to worship and follow their Christian discipleship with encouragement and in safety.

### 4. *Our Christian belief*

4.1 This policy is an expression of Christian belief in a number of respects:

- Each person is in the image of God, deserving of the best possible quality of relationships and care, and being in a state of vulnerability should not obscure the truth that God's spirit is

reflected in each person

- Christ himself entered into a state of vulnerability on the cross, subjected to mistreatment and abuse, and so Christ is identified with those who are found in a state of vulnerability.
- Christ's redeeming work and presence includes many gifts, especially gifts of healing, reconciliation, wholeness, empowerment, and responsibility, and this ministry is a witness and an inspiration to the Church. The Church is to share in the outworking of the ministry of the risen Christ so that God's purposes and Kingdom can become more fulfilled in creation
- The best quality of care and relationships, offered through the Church, are part of God's Kingdom because they express God's call for justice and Christ's presence with those who are vulnerable.

## 5. *The policy of the Bishop's Council of the Diocese of Gloucester*

5.1 Each parish is asked to make arrangements for one or more 'lead people' to be able to assist in the implementation of a local policy which may also link with Safeguarding issues with regard to children and young people as appropriate for each parish situation. There are three tasks:

- advocacy with regard to the concerns and views of those who are vulnerable with someone to be a voice at PCC meetings and other meetings in the church and wider community
- checking that the PCC policy for safeguarding adults of being followed in a coordinated way in the activities of the church, and advising the PCC
- listening to any concerns about their care raised by adults who are vulnerable and being, where necessary, a point of contact with the person designated in the diocese (the Diocesan Human Resources Manager and Safeguarding Adviser at Church House). Usually no concerns will be passed to an outside body without referral to the designated diocesan Adviser, except in an emergency.

5.2 Those appointed to listen to concerns will be required to undertake a DBS disclosure.

- 5.3 From a Diocesan perspective the Diocesan Safeguarding Board will have oversight of strategy, direction, training, resources and advice for parishes, and be accountable for reviewing and reporting to Bishop's Council on all matters of safeguarding.
- 5.4 The diocese will follow the proposals in 'Promoting a Safe Church' with regard to seeking Disclosure and Barring Service Disclosures for its officers and for those in parishes
- 5.5 The Diocese will appropriately follow up all allegations of abuse, including allegations against clergy, staff or volunteers acting on behalf of the Diocese. Professional advice will always be sought and referrals made to Local Authority Adult Services (and the police where appropriate). The Diocese will only conduct any investigations where this is appropriate. The advice of the Human Resources Manager and Safeguarding Adviser (see above) should be sought in the first instance and the guidelines providing in Promoting a Safe Church will be followed.
- 5.6 When a complaint arises against an ordained person, the clergy discipline procedures will be followed
- 5.7 Recognising the sensitive nature of information held in regard to adults who are vulnerable, any information provided and/or stored will be treated with appropriate sensitivity and confidentiality and in line with data protection requirements.

### **The national Church of England policy guidance – Promoting a Safe Church**

Detailed information can be found at:

<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/37405/promotingasafechurch.pdf>