

# Working with Adults who may be Vulnerable as part of the Prayer Team



This guide has been prepared for the Prayer Team

It is based on guidance drawn up by the Diocese of Liverpool



<http://www.liverpool.anglican.org/Vulnerable-Adults>

## Who is a Vulnerable Adult?

A person is a vulnerable adult if they are 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.

# Vulnerability

Human beings are, by their very nature, subject to the chances and changes of this world. Each one has strengths and weaknesses, capacities and restrictions. At some time everyone will be vulnerable to a wide range of pressures, concerns or dangers. No one is 'invulnerable'; some people may consider themselves to be strong but, when circumstances change, strengths can quickly disappear. Some people by reason of their physical or social circumstances have higher levels of vulnerability than others.

It is the Christian duty of everyone to recognise and support those who are identified as being more vulnerable. In supporting a vulnerable person we must do so with compassion and in a way that maintains dignity. Vulnerability is not an absolute; an individual cannot be labelled as 'vulnerable' in the same way as a child is regarded as such. Childhood is absolute: someone who is not yet eighteen years of age is, in the eyes of the law, a child; this is not the case with vulnerability.

## Some of the factors that increase vulnerability include:

- a sensory or physical disability or impairment;
- a learning disability;
- a physical illness;
- mental ill health (including dementia), chronic or acute;
- an addiction to 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, for example bereavement or previous abuse or trauma

## Useful contacts

Rev Simon Bickersteth  
St James Vicarage

Tel 01228 319830

[simon@stjamescarlisle.org.uk](mailto:simon@stjamescarlisle.org.uk)

Parish Safeguarding  
co-ordinator for adults:  
Jane Clark

Tel 01228 711183

[safeguarding@stjamescarlisle.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@stjamescarlisle.org.uk)

Diocesan safeguarding  
advisor:  
[safeguarding.adviser@carlisle-diocese.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding.adviser@carlisle-diocese.org.uk)

Carlisle Adult Social  
Care:

01228 221590

Cumbria Safeguarding  
Hub (for concerns  
about the safety of  
children):

0300 303 3249

Domestic Violence  
Victim Support :

0300 303 3797

Borderline counselling  
Service

Tel: 01228 596900

**To contact the police  
in emergency dial  
999**

# Abuse

## What is meant by abuse?

Abuse is any behaviour towards a person that deliberately, or unknowingly, causes him or her harm, endangers life, or violates rights.

Abuse may be physical, sexual, emotional, or may arise through neglect. In the case of Vulnerable Adults there may also be financial and spiritual abuse.

Abuse may be perpetrated by an individual, a group or an organisation

## Where does abuse take place?

Abuse can take place in:

- Their own homes
- The wider family
- In the case of children - schools, nurseries, youth and children's groups
- Community centres, sports clubs, hospitals and in public places including churches and ancillary buildings.

## Who are the abusers?

- An individual, a group or an organisation may perpetrate abuse.
- Anyone can be an abuser - a neighbour, friend, relative, parent, paid staff and volunteers.
- Institutions can be abusive if the care they provide is poor.

## Issues of Spirituality

Within faith communities harm may be caused by the inappropriate use of religious belief or practice. This can include:

- The misuse of the authority of leadership or penitential discipline
- Oppressive teaching
- Obtrusive healing and deliverance ministries
- The denial of the rights to faith and religious practice

## Lay People as Alerters

We all have a duty to:

- Contact the emergency services e.g. police, ambulance, in a life-threatening situation.
- Report suspected acts of abuse.
- Be alert to what abuse means and take seriously what we are told.
- Be alert to hints, signals and non-verbal communication that could indicate abuse, which is being denied or deliberately hidden.
- Think about what we see and ask if it is acceptable practice.
- Think about the safety of the person we suspect is being mistreated as well as our own safety.

If you're worried someone is being abused:

- Listen them - understand what they say and do
- Observe
- Record accurately all observations and information
- Trust your judgment
- Seek advice from other leaders, the clergy or the Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator

If the person is at immediate risk of significant harm, you should contact Social Services or the Police straight away. In other cases, seek advice first

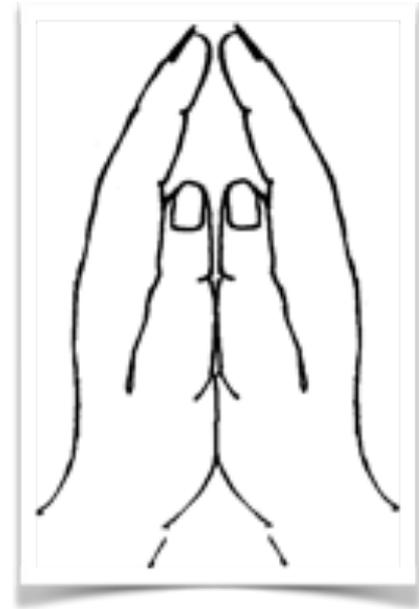
## If someone tells you about abuse

- Listen
- In the case of a child/young person say that you will have to tell.
- In the case of an adult if there is no issue regarding their understanding or capacity you must ask their permission if the abuse needs to be reported. If you think that a person is in danger because they have limited understanding or capacity then you can report the abuse without permission.
- Keep the person fully informed about what you are doing
- Record accurately afterwards
- Inform the Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator or the clergy

Many concerns can be addressed, help provided and services accessed via the church or by working together across agencies.

## Intercessory prayer

Jesus invites us, as his disciples, to pray for others and ourselves. And he promises that God answers our prayers. We need only believe, and as we speak, God responds. God may surprise us with the response, of course. We may not always receive exactly what we pray for. Sometimes we do, and sometimes we don't. We may need to puzzle about the response, or to continue to pray until the response becomes clear. That's true in personal prayer, and it's equally true in the intercessory prayer we offer for others. The Bible encourages us not to worry but to trust that God will provide what is needed and good.



Many of us feel uncomfortable when we pray with another person, especially for the first time. Intercessory prayer can feel like a shopping list offered to God, rather than a conversation. We need to listen carefully for the ways in which God may respond. When we pray with someone else, we will usually pray aloud for at least part of the time. And when we do, we allow the other person to overhear our conversation with God. When someone else prays aloud for us, we feel held in God's love and care through that prayer, and we participate in that prayer in our silent responses. When we pray with someone else for their specific needs, we allow them to join in and pray for themselves.

When praying in our role as pastoral visitor, we invite God into the relationship we are developing with the person being visited, and we bring God's care and love to those for whom we intercede. The love of God and love of neighbour which is the key to discipleship is brought clearly into our caring, and as the other person is held in God's love, so we share in that experience of equality before God in our response to God's call to relationship

# These guidelines are for the team members who pray for others in church- often for people they don't know

These are guidelines only and you may use your discretion but any problems should be reported to the team leader.

## When praying for someone

Remember to introduce yourself if the person is unknown to you.

Listen well to the person before praying.

Give assurance of confidentiality.

Ask questions to expand your understanding of the problem.

Ask permission for personal preference about physical contact eg: a healing hand laid on the shoulder, arm, head etc

Pray for the person, one team member at a time.

Watch the person's face and body language for reactions. There may be flickering of eyes or a change of facial expression.

Always be considerate of feelings and careful about language, tone of voice and attitude.

Be aware that what the person asks for may not be what God has planned for them.

After prayer ask how the person is feeling and if they sense anything has changed.

Always remember that the answer to prayer is in God's hands and nothing is guaranteed, but we do hope for miracles.

Encourage the person to pray for themselves and reassure them that they will continue to be prayed for by the team.

Advise counselling if you think it would help. (Borderline is a Christian agency- see page 2)

Be prepared to deal with emotional upset.

Consider your personal hygiene and use mints if necessary. (It is a close encounter)

## SOME TIPS

Training is advisable, either with the team or when the Bishop leads a course.

Parents/guardians must be asked for permission if a child requests prayer.

It is always advisable to have two members of the team to pray with someone who is vulnerable. Where this is not possible then ask another member of the church to assist you.

We are available to pray for people and act as intercessors but we are not advisors or counsellors.

There is a fine line, however, between the two. So, be careful about giving advice or making suggestions.

Please always show respect, dignity and gentleness.

Prayer is powerful and the person may become emotional during or after prayer.

The love of Christ should always be evident from a member of the prayer team.

### Things to have available:

Mints

Glass of water

Tissues

Bible

## KEEP IT TO YOURSELF! Confidentiality

To build a relationship of trust with the people you are praying with, it is important to be clear that you will treat the things they share with you in confidence.

There are two exceptions to this:

1. If someone specifically gives you permission to share something they have said with another person (e.g. they give permission for a situation they are facing to be mentioned in the intercessions at church, or passed on to the clergy.)
2. If the person says something that leads you to think they, or another person are at risk you have a duty of care to pass this on to the appropriate person or agency.

NEVER pass on information to anyone who doesn't have a "need to know" i.e. do not gossip

Notes: