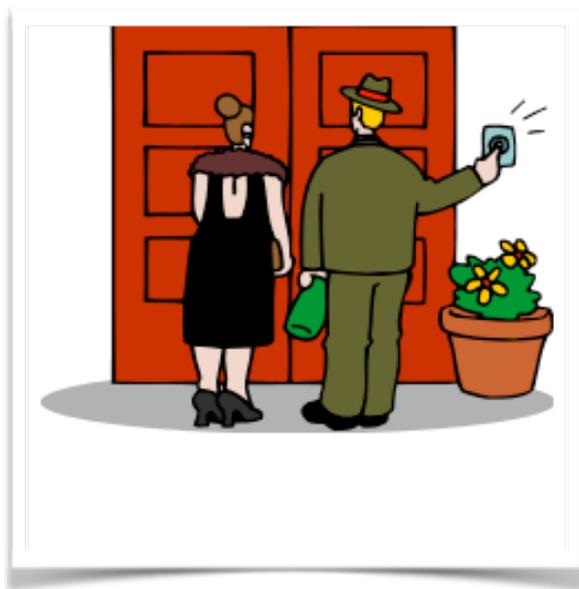


# Pastoral Care for Vulnerable Adults



This guide has been prepared for the Visiting 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*

[jane.clark048@gmail.com](mailto:jane.clark048@gmail.com)

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

Carlisle Adult Social  
Care:

*01228 221590*

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

Their duty is:

- To contact the emergency services first, e.g. police, ambulance, if in a life-threatening situation.
- To report suspected acts of abuse. Lay people should inform the Clergy, Churchwardens or Parish Safeguarding co-ordinator. They will inform the appropriate diocese advisers.
- To be alert to what abuse means and take seriously what they are told.
- To ensure the safety of the person you suspect is being mistreated as well as your own safety.
- To think about what they see and ask if it is acceptable practice.

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.

# Pastoral Care Visiting

## Good Practice Guidelines

### Pray beforehand

Whatever the reason for your visit, remember to ask for God's help and guidance. This could be a time of preparatory prayer before you leave your house, a short prayer on the way to the door – or both!

### Timing

Think about the most appropriate time for a visit. For example, early evening can be difficult for families with young children; elderly people may be unhappy about answering the door after dark – even if you arrange the visit in advance.

### Arranging Visits

Whenever possible, contact the person in advance, by telephone or letter, to find a mutually convenient time to visit. It is helpful if you say why you are visiting. This will enable the person visited to understand the reasons behind the visit – and give them the opportunity to informally consent (or not) to the arrangement.

### During a Visit

In all visiting, it is helpful to put yourself imaginatively in the other person's position. The thoughtful, sensitive visitor is the most welcome.

### Ending a Visit

Be aware of the time during your visit (but avoid frequently looking at your watch!). Don't be afraid to end a meeting earlier than planned if the person seems to be tiring.

Give a 'five minute' warning: "I'm going to have to leave in a few minutes. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about before I go?"

Offer a further visit, if appropriate – and an indication of when this is likely to be.

If this is one of a series of planned visits make a firm appointment for your next visit.

### Visiting in Someone's Home

Always wait to be invited in and go into the room that the person indicates. Don't assume that you will always be asked into the same room!

Look for the clues of where to sit down. Spectacles left on a table, an open book or magazine, the TV remote control, etc are all indicators that this is someone's usual seat – so avoid sitting there. If in doubt, ask the person you are visiting where they would like you to sit.

Don't follow people into other rooms, for example, into the kitchen if they are making you a drink.

Unless the person you are visiting is confined to bed, never go upstairs in a house – even to go to the toilet!

If you are visiting someone who is in bed, always check to make sure that it is alright for you to go upstairs and then that it is alright to enter the room. These are personal areas of a person's home and they may need time to be properly dressed, etc before greeting visitors.

Never go into other rooms in the house alone. It may seem unlikely, but if the person you have visited loses or mislays something valued, you don't want to be accused of taking it.

Never look through drawers or cupboards -even if the person wants you to look for something for them. It's better to look together; then there can be no misunderstandings.

Never agree to take something from a handbag, briefcase, etc. Take the bag to the person and allow them to open it and look for what they want.

## Protection of the Visitor

We recommend that if you are visiting on behalf of the church/as part of a parish visiting team you visit in pairs.

If for any reason you find yourself visiting alone, always let someone else know when you will be visiting and for how long. If you are concerned about confidentiality, leave your mobile telephone number—or a note of where you are in a sealed envelope. Never visit someone of the opposite sex alone in their home.

Being part of a team – visiting vulnerable adults, taking out communion – means that there are other people around to help and support the individual team members. When you visit as a member of a parish organised team, you need to let the team know what is happening.

Everyone organises their teams differently, but there will usually be someone who acts as a 'co-ordinator', who sorts out who is going to visit a particular person, etc. They also need to know when you have visited – and of any outcomes that need following up.



## Record Visits

Make a note of the date of your visit, the time of your arrival and the length of time you stayed. This helps you keep a record of your visiting and can be useful if the person you are visiting is confused about when you last visited.

## Identity Cards

Always take your identity card when you are visiting – even if you know the person you are visiting well. There may be someone present, e.g. a family member or a health or social care worker, who needs to be reassured that you are a genuine visitor from the church

## Medication

Never offer 'over the counter' medicines to the people you visit. Painkillers, cough medicines, throat pastilles, etc. can all have side effects and may not be compatible with other prescribed medicines the person may be taking

## Good practice when visiting residential settings

Sign in and out

Introduce yourself to care staff, even if they are hard to find, and say what you are doing.

If someone wants to be moved find a member of staff, don't try to move them on your own.

Apply all the same principles as home visiting

## Food and drink

Don't offer sweets, drinks or other food items to people you are visiting. You don't know what they are able to have and they may not want to refuse for fear of offending you.

## Handling Money and Gifts

It can be very easy for someone to be confused about money. Ensure that if you are part of a visiting team you check your parishes' policy with regards to handling money.

If you are asked to go shopping for someone you should again check with your parish regarding its policy on shopping for people and handling money.

If someone wants to give money to the church, always put it in an envelope and mark it on the outside as a donation – and get the Treasurer to acknowledge receipt or get them to sign up to the envelope scheme so that monies can be traced.

If someone wants to give you possessions that they own for a church fete/Christmas fayre etc ensure that the person giving you the possession must have the mental capacity to understand the size and the value of the gift they are giving.

You should never take something for going.

## Physical Movements & Contact

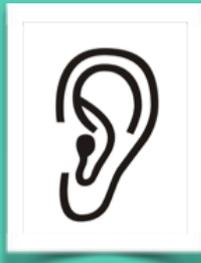
If someone in a residential establishment or hospital wants to be moved, find a member of staff - don't try and do it yourself. Avoid physical contact with people in nightclothes – they can be less concealing than normal day clothes and it can cause embarrassment.



## Practical Skills

### Listening Well

The first skill is listening well, which requires empathy (the ability to put oneself in the other person's place). It also requires the ability to be silent, to allow the other person the space to talk about him or herself. These skills can be developed with awareness and practice



Often in pastoral visiting, most of the time is taken up with conversation about the person being visited. They will often talk about themselves, describing difficulties, hinting at painful emotions.

### Themes

Listen to the themes in the story; needs, concerns, issues and emotional responses. These are the things that will help shape prayer. At the end of a visit or of their story, the visitor may want to offer to share in prayer with the other person. It is important to ask if this is wanted. There are many ways of asking, giving the other person the opportunity to decline. 'Would you like me to pray with you?' or 'Would you like a word of prayer?' Some people say, 'Shall we offer this time to God in prayer?' If the person being visited declines it may be appropriate to assure them that others at the church are praying for them but care must be taken that confidentiality is not breached

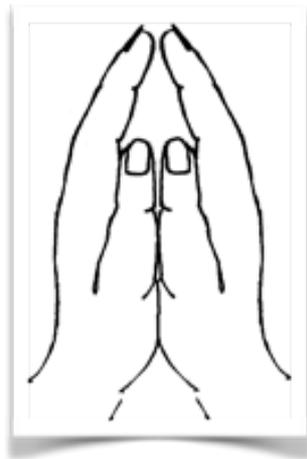
### Remember details

The second skill is the ability to listen to the story being told, remembering details and helping the person telling the story to make sense of it. Sometimes we will hear stories that seem confused or illogical, and the visitor can help to clarify the experience for the person being listened to. Sometimes this involves trying to get the facts straight (the who, what, where, when, how sorts of questions). Sometimes it means helping the other person to express feelings about the situation. A visitor might ask them directly 'How does that feel?' or reflect back what has been heard, 'I heard you say...' It is good to help a person understand their own experience. Be gentle, don't interrogate them!



## 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

**KEEP IT TO YOURSELF!**

### Confidentiality

In order to build a relationship of trust with the person being visited it is important to be clear that you will treat the things they share with you in confidence. There are two exceptions to this;

- First is if they specifically give 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.)
- Secondly, 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.