

Working with Adults who may be Vulnerable at Cornerstone



This guide has been prepared for volunteers at Cornerstone

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

Who is a Vulnerable Adult?

A person is a vulnerable adult if they are over 18 and by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other reason are permanently or temporarily unable to take care of themselves or to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation

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

Vulnerability

Human beings are, by their very nature, subject to the chances and changes of this world. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses, capacities and restrictions. At some time we will all 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. Cornerstone is a facility that is open to everyone, however there will often be adults using the building who have a wide range of vulnerabilities and may need extra support and care from our volunteers. 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:

- physical disability or impairment
- learning disabilities
- physical illness
- mental ill health (including dementia)
- addiction to alcohol or drugs
- the failing faculties in old age
- permanent or temporary reduction in physical, mental or emotional capacity brought about by life events, for example bereavement, previous abuse or trauma

Useful contacts

Rev Simon Bickersteth

St James Vicarage
Tel 01228 319830
simon@stjamescarlisle.org.uk

Parish Safeguarding
Officer for adults:
Jane Clark

Tel 01228 711183
safeguarding@stjamescarlisle.org.uk

Diocesan safeguarding
advisor:

safeguarding.adviser@carlisle-diocese.org.uk

Carlisle Adult Social
Care:
01228 221590

Cumbria Safeguarding
Hub (for concerns
about the safety of
children):
0333 240 1727

Domestic Violence
Victim Support
0300 303 3797

**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
- Community centres, sports clubs, hospitals and in public places including churches and ancillary buildings.
- In the case of children - schools, nurseries, youth and children's groups

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
- Oppressive teaching
- Obtrusive healing and deliverance ministries
- The denial of the rights to faith and religious practice

Cornerstone Staff can act 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 that 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 the Cornerstone manager or their deputy, the clergy or the Parish Safeguarding Officer

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.

Confidentiality

To build a relationship of trust with the people you are working 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

If someone tells you about abuse

- **Listen** - it can be difficult for someone to talk about abuse, especially for the first time
- **Stay calm** and try not to appear shocked. Be **sympathetic**
- **Tell** them they did the right thing by telling you and you are taking this seriously
- **Record** everything accurately afterwards
- **Inform** the Cornerstone Manager or their deputy who will then report to the Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator or to the clergy

Note:

- If the person is a child/young person you cannot keep this a secret.
- If the person is an adult and there is no issue regarding their understanding or capacity you must ask their permission before the abuse is reported.
- If you think that a person is in danger or they have limited understanding or capacity then you can report the abuse without permission.