



Good practice guide for church work with vulnerable adults

Who do we mean by a vulnerable adult?

A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 or over whose ability to protect himself or herself from violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation is significantly impaired through physical or mental disability or illness, old age, emotional fragility or distress or otherwise; and for that purpose, the reference to being impaired is to being temporarily or indefinitely impaired.

Some of the factors which increase vulnerability are:

- 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
- Domestic abuse

Activities with adults who may be vulnerable

- These recommendations apply to all churches' activities with adults who may be vulnerable.
- They apply as much to church 'in house' activities for regular attendees as to activities which you run in and for the local community.
- Activities set up specifically for adults known to be vulnerable will need planning and preparation of a kind not needed for activities open to all.
- Ensure there are supervision arrangements and a reporting line back to the PCC.

Respect

- Always respect the vulnerable adult and all his or her abilities.
- Ensure his or her individuality - e.g. always use their name.
- Give the same respect as to others.

- Respect differences – e.g. in appearance, ideas, personalities, ability.
- Don't assume or withhold physical contact – ask first.
- Have a proper conversation using appropriate language
- Sometimes it may be necessary to set boundaries for some to ensure the safety of others.
- Obtain specialist advice when necessary, e.g. on harassment, disability, mental illness, domestic abuse.

Transport

- Lifts arranged by adults among themselves are a private matter and not the concern of the church.
- Lifts arranged by the church, whether using existing pastoral care workers or a special team of drivers, are a church responsibility. Drivers need to be safely recruited. Carers should be consulted as appropriate.
- All cars that carry vulnerable adults must be comprehensively insured. The insured person must make sure that their insurance covers the giving of lifts during church activities. They must inform their insurance company that lifts may be given. There are separate requirements governing minibuses.
- If lifts are also provided to the GP, hospital appointments or adult social care facilities this is regulated activity and attracts a DBS check with barring information.

Visiting adults who may be vulnerable in their homes (including residential and nursing homes)

- Always do an assessment of risk to both the vulnerable adult and other interested parties.
- If there are concerns, give careful consideration to whether the visit is absolutely necessary.
- Always carry a mobile phone and ensure that someone knows where you are and when you are expected to return.
- Don't call unannounced, call by arrangement.
- Always carry identification with you or a note of introduction from your church.
- When referring someone on to another person or agency, talk this through with the vulnerable adult. Ask his or her permission before passing on personal information.
- A record of pastoral visits and home communions must be kept by the church. Your local church should set a policy on this.

What to do if a vulnerable adult appears to be at risk

- The church does not itself investigate situations of possible risk to vulnerable adults from others but church members are entitled to clarify whether they consider there may be such a risk.

- If you have reasonable grounds for suspecting that a vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected it may be appropriate to refer them to the local authority adult protection service.
- The consent of the person concerned is normally needed. However, if they are not able to give informed consent or are being intimidated, they can be referred without consent.
- If in doubt whether a referral is appropriate, consult the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser or the local authority adult protection service.
- Make a record of the concerns and the action taken as soon as possible after the event and make sure a copy is on file. See guidance on *Recording safeguarding issues*.
- An abuse of power is a safeguarding issue.
- If there is a suspected criminal offence the victim should be encouraged to report the matter to the police and assisted in doing so if necessary.
- Refer on and work with existing statutory and voluntary services.

Needs of carers

- Many carers are not aware that they are carers and may benefit from links with organizations for carers which can offer help and advice.
- Local carers' organizations are able to advise churches on caring issues.

- Remember the needs of carers – treat them as individuals, include them as appropriate, offer breaks and short times apart and practical assistance if feasible.
- Carers are entitled to an assessment of need from local authorities, but this does not carry a guarantee of services to meet the needs identified.

Important telephone numbers:

Statutory agencies (please write in your local numbers)

Police non-emergency/emergency	101/999
Local Council Adult Protection	
Local General Hospital	

Diocesan contacts:

Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser	01727 818107
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Parish contacts (please write in your local numbers):

Name	Role	Phone
	Incumbent	
	PSO	