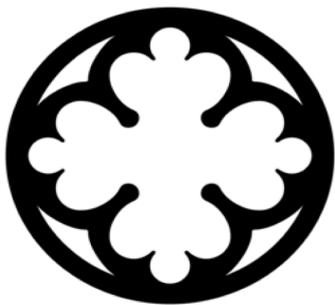


Pastoral Care for Vulnerable Adults



SAINT
JAMES
CARLISLE

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](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

Parish Safeguarding
co-ordinator for
adults: Jane Clark

Tel 01228 711183

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

LetGo Domestic
Violence Service:

03448 736 290

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

Structured support

It is best practice for each church to have a support system in place for their pastoral visitors, providing someone who they can talk to, seek advice from and share with in confidence, issues and concerns about a visit or a series of visits. This may be a more experienced visitor, or local clergy. The availability of such support is important in helping the visitor to reflect and to develop and can be an excellent support if a visitor feels uneasy about an element of a visit or their relationship with the person being cared for. The exact role may differ from place to place and it would be helpful if the church council approve a job description that such a person would fulfil.

Know your limits

Avoid allowing people to become too dependent on you as a pastoral visitor – be clear what you are able to offer and what the person might need to go elsewhere for.

Being sensitive to another person does not mean having to agree with everything they say, or doing all that they ask.

Equally recognise that people have a right to say “no” to your visit. Try not to feel rejected! Part of caring is being respectful to other person’s wishes and giving them space to deal with things in their own way. There may be another occasion when a visit comes just as the right time.

Personal Safety

Most visits are happy, comfortable occasions when everyone feels safe and the visitor often feels as ministered to as the person being offered care. However, it is common sense to recognise that when visiting someone in their home we are vulnerable and need to bear some things in mind. When visiting – know where your exits are and do a brief mental risk assessment wherever the visit takes place. It is best to visit wherever possible in twos.

Talk with other visitors about what helps them feel safe; particularly in the home of someone you don’t know.

Let someone know where you are going and how long you expect to



Self Awareness

You need to be aware of how some pastoral situations may affect you and leave space between the tasks of the day. If you have suffered a bereavement you might be able to offer great help to a person in similar circumstance but this might be very draining or upsetting for you. Your reactions may take you by surprise so do not be afraid to ask for help or talk an issue over with your supervisor or another person whom you trust and respect.

Boundary Setting

Before a visit contact the person to arrange a convenient time, date and venue. Try to be sensitive to what is an appropriate length of visit. Don't outstay your welcome but don't rush either – watch for the body language of the other person.

Remember you are a guest in a person's home so allow them to set the agenda for any conversation. Sometimes the really important matters are mentioned just as you are about to leave – so be flexible!

Referral

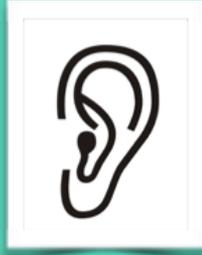
If the person visited asks for further help, find out what action they want you to take. Do not promise anything you cannot fulfil. Keep people informed of progress you have made in seeking further help. Try to recognise when you need



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.

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!

Themes

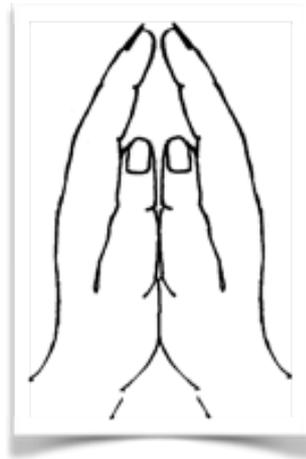
Listen to the themes in the story; needs, concerns, issues and emotional responses. These are the things that will help shape prayer. At the end of a visit or of their story, the visitor may want to offer to share in prayer with the other person. It is important to ask if this is wanted. There are many 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



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.