

## **POLICY FOR PASTORAL CARE WALBURY BEACON**

**All those involved in pastoral ministry, whether paid or unpaid, clergy or lay, should be working within a set of guidelines to protect vulnerable people but also ensure that workers are not wrongly accused of abuse or misconduct.**

### **Pastoral Relationships**

Exercising any kind of ministry involves workers developing an understanding of themselves and how they relate to others, how they increase the well-being of others, and how they ensure their own well-being and safety. People in positions of trust necessarily have power, although this may not be apparent to them, therefore respecting professional boundaries is particularly important. Many pastoral relationships can become intertwined with friendships and social contacts, making this guidance even more necessary.

When providing pastoral care we should:

- exercise particular care when ministering to persons with whom we have a close personal friendship or family relationship.
- be aware of the dangers of dependency in pastoral and professional relationships and seek advice or supervision when these concerns arise.

Those involved in healing ministry:

- should be trained in the theology and non-intrusive practice of that work.
- should recognize their limits and not undertake any ministry that is beyond their competence or role. In such instances, the person should be referred to someone with appropriate expertise.

We should avoid:

- behaviour that could give the impression of inappropriate favouritism or special relationships.

And

- treat those with whom we minister or visit with respect, encouraging self-determination, independence, and choice.
- If pastoral relationships develop into romantic attachments the situations should be handled sensitively. We need to recognize such a development and make it clear to both the person concerned and a supervisor or colleague. Alternative arrangements should be made for the ongoing pastoral care of the person concerned.
- Church workers should not undertake any pastoral ministry under the influence of drink or non-prescribed drugs.

### **Conversations and Interviews a Ministry Context**

Informal conversations and any interviews in a ministry context are pastoral encounters. Appropriate language and behaviour, free from Innuendoes or compliments of a sexual nature should be used.

A pastoral visitor should consider in advance:

- the place of the meeting, arrangement of the furniture, lighting, and dress;
- the balance of privacy for conversation with the opportunity for supervision (open doors or windows in doors, another person nearby);
- the physical distance between people determined by hospitality and respect;

- whether the circumstances suggest a professional or social interaction;
- the propriety or danger of visiting or being visited alone, especially in the evening;
- the personal safety and comfort of all participants;
- establishing at the outset the nature of the interview regarding subject matter, confidentiality and duration;
- the appropriateness of initiating or receiving any physical contact, for example gestures of comfort, which may be unwanted or misinterpreted.

### **Record Keeping and Privacy**

A pastoral visitor should:

- keep record of pastoral encounters including date, time, place, subject, and actions to be taken.
- only record content with the person's consent unless it is a matter of child protection or might be a record of suspicion of abuse or mistreatment.
- be factual and avoid rumour or opinion.
- Keep records concerning issues of abuse indefinitely (at least 50 years).
- publishing, sharing, or keeping of personal data or images should follow legislation.

### **Working with Colleagues**

The needs of family should be acknowledged and all who work together should respect boundaries between work and home, allowing sufficient time for relaxation and holidays. Everyone who works with vulnerable people should know to whom they are accountable and have a designated person with whom to discuss their work.

Church workers should

1. know to whom they are accountable and be regularly mentored by them or another person.
2. should ensure that their tasks can be carried out by another if they are ill or otherwise unable to fulfil their responsibilities.

### **Financial Integrity**

Financial dealings can have an impact on the church and the community and must always be handled with integrity. Those with such authority should maintain proper systems and not delegate that responsibility to anyone else.

Church workers

- should not seek personal financial gain from their position beyond their salary or recognized allowances.
- should not be influenced by offers of money.
- should ensure that church and personal finances are kept apart and should avoid any conflict of interest.

And

- Money received by the church should be handled by two unrelated lay people.
- Any gifts received should be disclosed to a supervisor or colleague and it should be decided whether they could be accepted.
- Care should be taken not to canvass for church donations from those who may be vulnerable.

### **Behaviour Outside Work and Christian Ministry**

This procedure concerns the safe recruitment of paid employees and volunteers in parishes who are to work with children or those who may be vulnerable.

1. The PCC should agree on ways in which new employees and volunteers who are to work with children or vulnerable people will be recruited and appointed, and who will be involved in the process. Agreement should be reached on who will be responsible for taking up references, seeking a confidential declaration, and validating the identity of applicants for CRB disclosures; these tasks can be completed by different people.
2. Leaders of groups should inform the person managing recruitment of possible new employees or volunteers at an early stage so that these procedures can be followed.
3. In general people should be involved in the life of the parish for at least six months before being asked to help with work with children or vulnerable people.
4. People may visit groups on an occasional basis where it would be unrealistic to recruit them using this procedure. They mustn't be made responsible for a group or left in sole charge.
5. Young people between the ages of 14 and 16 assisting as helpers should be treated as 'visitors' to a group; care should be taken to support and supervise these young people.
6. Young people between the ages of 16 and 18 assisting as helpers should be appointed in the same way as adults, but with their parents' permission.

### **Managing the Process**

1. For any position, a job description will be prepared, to include a statement of the tasks and responsibilities and to whom the person will be accountable.
2. A decision will be made on whether any new appointment requires a disclosure from the CRB. For disclosures at the standard or enhanced level there must be an expectation that the role will include regular contact with children or with vulnerable adults complying with the CRB definition.
3. Applicants will be asked to complete an application form, which includes information about the policies required by the CRB. These policies will be made available to the applicant on request. The form enables applicants to show their qualifications and experience for the tasks/position offered.
4. Seek two references including at least one that can comment on a person's suitability to work with either children or vulnerable people. If possible, ensure that one reference is from outside the present congregation. Obtain a reference from the incumbent of any previous church.
5. Interview the candidates. These can be relatively informal but still need to ensure that the volunteer and the task are compatible and that the volunteer has the necessary skills to carry it out.
6. Ask each successful applicant to complete a confidential self-declaration form. This gives the individual the opportunity to declare any convictions or allegations at an early stage. It should be made clear to the applicant to whom the form should be returned and who will see any confidential information it contains. Information contained on a declaration should be discussed with the diocesan child protection adviser or the person designated by the diocese to deal with these matters for vulnerable people. The manager of the recruitment procedure should be informed when a satisfactory confidential declaration has been obtained.
7. Complete the CRB process if applicable to the post.
8. Once all the checks have been completed and the person is appointed, any contract, probationary period or commissioning should be agreed. The person appointed should be asked to adhere to any diocesan policy for the protection of either children or vulnerable people, including a code of conduct. Post holders should be offered training and support to carry out their tasks.

### **Confidential Declaration Form**

To be completed by those wishing to work with children or vulnerable people.

It applies to beneficed clergy, those who hold the bishop's licence or permission to officiate, employees, ordinands and volunteers who are likely to be in regular contact with children or vulnerable people. This form is strictly confidential and will be seen only by those responsible for the appointment and, when appropriate, the diocesan/bishop's adviser for children and vulnerable people.

All forms will be kept securely under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998. If you answer yes to any question, please give details, on a separate sheet if necessary, giving the number of the question you are answering.

### **Ministering to Known Offenders**

A disproportionately large number of convicted offenders against children and vulnerable people attend churches. The figures range from 25 per cent upwards. It is therefore possible for many congregations to have offenders amongst their worshippers, some of whom will be known. Not all will have committed sexual offences; some will have been guilty of neglect, physical or emotional abuse. The Church's duty to minister to all imposes a particular responsibility to such people. This must not however compromise the safety of children and those adults who may be vulnerable.

Where an offender is known, befriended and helped by a group of volunteers to lead a fulfilled life without direct contact with children or vulnerable adults the chances of re-offending are diminished and the Church has thus an important role in preventing abuse.

When it is known that a member of the congregation has been accused or convicted of abusing children, young or vulnerable people the diocesan child protection adviser or the person designated to give advice on vulnerable people must be consulted, so that a safe course of action can be agreed.

Because of the compulsive nature of sexual abuse it is expected that an agreement will be entered into with the offender.

A frank discussion should be held with the offender, explaining that a small group from the congregation will need to know the facts to create a safe place for him or her. If possible the membership of the group should be agreed. Those needing to know are likely to include the clergy, churchwardens, Child Protection or vulnerable person's coordinator and any befriending volunteers. Anybody coordinating activities for vulnerable groups will need to be informed so that they do not inadvertently ask the person to volunteer.

Consider whether, with the offender's agreement, the congregation should be told.

It must be made clear that no one else should be informed of the facts without the offender's knowledge. The highest levels of confidentiality should be maintained. The group should offer support and friendship as well as supervision. They should endeavour to keep open channels of communication.

It will be necessary to establish clear boundaries for both the protection of the young or vulnerable people and to lessen the possibility of the adult being wrongly accused of abuse. Prepare an agreement which includes:

- attending designated meetings only;
- sitting apart from children or vulnerable people;
- staying away from areas of the building where vulnerable groups meet;
- attending a house group where there are no children or vulnerable people;
- declining hospitality where there are children or vulnerable people;

- never being alone with children or vulnerable people;
- never working with children or vulnerable people.
- Ask the offender to sign the agreement.
- Enforce the agreement – do not allow manipulation.
- Provide close support and pastoral care.
- Review the agreement at regular intervals.
- Ban the offender from church if the agreement is broken and tell other churches or the probation officer. If the person cannot be banned because they live in the parish, the advice of the diocesan registrar should be sought and a high level of supervision maintained.

In some cases offences only come to light after many years. In such situations great sensitivity will be required. It must, however, be remembered that there may still be a substantial risk to children or vulnerable people.