



## **Good practice in safeguarding**

This guidance is intended to inform parishes about some of the elements that contribute to ensuring a safer culture is developed and reflects the good practice that should be seen.

Good practice safeguards people who may be vulnerable. It also protects anyone from a congregation who comes into contact with them, in whatever context, from being wrongly accused of abuse or misconduct. The 'Clergy' provide a good practice guide for all those involved in pastoral ministry in the Diocese. Everyone, whether paid or unpaid, clergy or laity, should be working within church policies and guidelines.

### **1. Children and young people**

The following areas are included as being specifically relevant and useful to safeguarding children and young people's activities. The House of Bishops' policy on child protection ('Protecting All God's Children', 2010) requires all clergy and lay people (including volunteers) to maintain the highest professional standards in their work and relationships with children. The Diocese has adopted a Code of Safer Working Practice (see Blackburn Diocese safeguarding policy 2015) which is intended to keep children and young people safe from harm and adults protected from suspicions, false allegations or temptation. We ask all to agree to abide by this code which forms part of the volunteer agreement.

### **Supervision and training**

The PCC should ensure that both paid staff and volunteers have the opportunity to meet together regularly to discuss any concerns, to receive support and be helped to review their work.

*Supervision* is the formal reviewing and planning of the work of employees and volunteers. Supervisors are responsible for making the work purposeful and focused.



*Training* is the ongoing activity of learning for the purpose of carrying out your responsibilities well and to the required standard. All those working with children and young people should attend safeguarding training, details of Diocesan training can be found on the Diocesan web page.

### **Openness and accountability**

Children and young people are best protected within environments and relationships that are trusting and open. This can be achieved by colleagues supporting each other to keep their practice within the Diocesan 'Code of Safer Working Practice' and acting without delay on behaviour that puts a worker or vulnerable person at risk.

### **Confidentiality and information sharing**

The highest level of confidentiality should be maintained at all times in relationships with children and vulnerable adults. Concerns about abuse and maltreatment however, must not be kept secret or deemed confidential. Where a child is suffering or likely to suffer harm, information must be shared promptly in order to protect the child (advice sought / matter reported within 24 hours). Research and experience affirm that keeping such secrets 'confidential' enables the abuse and its harm to continue and only serves to protect the abuser.

## **2. Vulnerable adults**

### **Pastoral Relationships**

Anyone whose ministry brings them into contact with vulnerable people should remain aware of their own behaviours and how these might be viewed by a vulnerable adult. Pastoral relationships will often run parallel with friendships and social contacts, but should always remain distinct. Perceptions can be difficult to manage and workers and volunteers

should always seek to have a clear understanding with vulnerable people of the nature and boundaries of their contact with them.

Along with the points in the 'Code of Safer Working Practice' (see above), the following principles should be followed:

- exercise particular care when ministering to persons with whom there already exists 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 any concerns arise
- minister within your remit and limits – do not undertake any ministry that is beyond your competence or role (e.g. therapeutic counselling, deliverance ministry, or giving legal advice); instead refer to the person or agency with appropriate expertise
- avoid behaviour that could give the impression of favouritism or special relationship
- always respectfully encourage self-determination, independence and choice
- do not undertake any pastoral ministry whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs

### **Conversations and interviews in a ministry context**

Church pastoral workers / clergy must always be aware of their language and behaviour and should consider in advance the:

- value of taking a colleague along with them on a home visit
- place of the meeting, arrangement of the furniture and lighting, their own deportment
- balance of privacy for conversation with the opportunity for being seen by others (open doors or windows in doors, another person nearby)
- physical distance between people, taking into account hospitality and respect, being aware that this may differ as a result of past trauma or abusive experiences
- circumstances and whether they suggest a professional or social interaction
- propriety or danger of visiting or being visited alone, especially in the evening
- personal safety and comfort of all participants
- the appropriateness of initiating or receiving any physical contact, for example gestures of comfort, which may be unwanted or misinterpreted

Workers / clergy should always establish the nature of the meeting at the outset of each interaction in respect to subject matter, confidentiality and duration. All conversations / interviews should be recorded and stored securely.

## **Sexual Conduct**

The sexual conduct of church workers / clergy will have an impact on their ministry within the Church. It is never appropriate for workers to take advantage of their role and engage in sexual activity with anyone with whom they have a pastoral relationship.

Workers and volunteers should be aware of the power imbalance inherent in pastoral relationships and

- must not engage in sexual activity with an adult or a child
- must take responsibility for their words and actions if wishing to make physical contact with another adult (e.g. a hug may be misunderstood) or to talk to them about sexual matters. This will include seeking permission, respecting the person's wishes, noticing and responding to non-verbal communication, refraining from such conduct if in doubt about the person's wishes
- must not view, possess or distribute sexual images of children and should refrain from viewing, possessing or distributing sexually exploitative images of adult
- should avoid situations where they feel vulnerable to temptation or where their conduct may be misinterpreted
- avoid, as far as possible, any words or actions that might be misinterpreted

## **Financial Integrity**

Financial dealings can have an impact on attitudes to the Church and the community, and must always be handled with integrity. Those with responsibility for such matters should maintain proper systems and not delegate that responsibility to anyone else. Church workers and volunteers should:

- not seek personal financial gain from their position
- not be influenced by offers of money, or take inappropriate responsibility for such
- ensure that church and personal finances are kept apart and should avoid any conflict of interest
- ensure any monies received are handled by two unrelated lay people
- disclose any gift received to a responsible person from within the parish and decide on acceptance, confirmation and use
- not canvass for donations to the church from those who may be vulnerable, e.g. the recently bereaved or those who lack capacity to make such decisions