

**Parish of St Peter and the Good Shepherd, Bearsted and Harrietsham**

**CHILD and VULNERABLE ADULT SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

(Copy to be kept in Parish Office and on Parish Website [catholic-bearsted.org.uk](http://catholic-bearsted.org.uk))

**Summary of Contents**

1. Where to look? Sources of Guidance (eg Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service)
2. Why does our parish need a Safeguarding Policy?
3. What is Child abuse?
4. How can we minimise the risk of abuse to children within our parish?
  - i) Guidelines for good practice when working with children.
  - ii) Specific guidelines for organisations and groups involving children.
5. Actions to follow on receipt of information (Listen : Record : Refer).
6. Concern or Allegation?
7. Urgent Action, Recording and Confidentiality
8. Guidance on Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Procedures

**IN A NUTSHELL: FOUR KEY STEPS SHOULD YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT ABUSE**

1. Always follow the guidelines in this Parish Policy scrupulously.
2. Do not investigate the matter yourself.
3. Make a written note of the facts and reasons that have given rise to your concern.
4. Refer your concern to a member of the Parish Safeguarding Team as soon as you can.
5. **URGENT ACTION:** If a child is suspected to be **at risk of immediate harm, is physically injured or it is thought that sexual abuse has occurred within the last 24 hours, contact Police and Social Services immediately**, giving full information. There should be staff available from either agency who can respond at any time of day or night.

Seek medical help where necessary. Give medical staff relevant information about the allegation or concern.

**Parish Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Team:**

Father Geoff Pointer	01622 736100
Terry Kinsman	01622 730119
Carol Piggott	01622 736661

Social Services (Kent) 9 - 5, Monday - Friday	0845 824 7247
Social Services (County Out of Hours service)	0845 7626777
Police	01622 690055

**Diocesan Safeguarding Numbers:**

Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator: Helen Sheppard 0207 2611606

(Revised 31 March 2014)

## 1. SOURCES OF GUIDANCE

- a) **Parish Safeguarding Team** Except in emergency, first contact should always be with the Parish Safeguarding Team, who will in turn involve as appropriate the Diocese Safeguarding Coordinator and / or other Agencies.
- b) **Parish Safeguarding Policy** A Policy Summary is on noticeboard, the **full Policy Statement is held in the Catechetical Cupboard in the Parish Office**
- b) **Diocese Safeguarding Coordinator:** Father Francis Moran, who is supported by the Diocese Safeguarding Commission Office: (Helen Sheppard). The Diocese fully cooperates with CSAS and operates under their Guidance and Procedures (see below).
- <http://www.rcsouthwark.co.uk/safeguarding.html>
- d) **CSAS (Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service).** Their website is very helpful and is constantly updated – look at the **Online Manual for Procedures** and copy forms etc:
- CSAS Procedures Manual: <http://www.csasprocedures.uk.net/>
  - CSAS Forms Library: <http://www.csasprocedures.uk.net/chapters/forms.html>
  - CSAS Incident / Concern Reporting Form: (See Appendix A) Form **R Alleg 1**
- e) **Church of England Safeguarding Policy Manual.** Though not a Catholic Church document, it contains much useful information on Safeguarding Procedures nationally. <http://www.churchofengland.org/media/37378/protectingallgodschildren.pdf>

## 2. WHY DOES OUR PARISH NEED A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY?

The Church, just like our wider society, has grown more aware of the risks children can sometimes face at home and in the community. We have a duty to ensure that our children, young people, and vulnerable adults are, as far as possible, safe from harm.

This requires those who work with, or are responsible for, children and young people to observe the best practice. They also need to be aware of what to do if cases of abuse should emerge or be suspected.

Moreover the whole parish should be aware of and sensitive to these procedures so that they become 'second nature', a normal part of everything we do as a parish community.

The parish policy is outlined in the following chapters. It is being introduced:

- To raise awareness in our parish of the need to protect its most vulnerable members.
- To ensure parishioners are informed of the Parish Child Safeguarding measures and about the team which will coordinate them.
- To implement the guidelines of the Catholic Church in England and Wales for good practice when working with children and young people, and to ensure that these procedures are known about and followed by all volunteers and parish workers.
- To detail the course of action to be followed in cases of **concerns or allegations of abuse**.
- To ensure that volunteers are responsibly appointed, given support and training, and to help protect them from the risk of false allegations.
- To explain what child abuse is.

### THE PARISH SAFEGUARDING TEAM

A Parish Safeguarding Team will assist in implementing and coordinating this policy. Its task will be to ensure confidentiality in the handling of any personal information regarding those who work in the parish with children, and to assist the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator Father Francis Moran should any accusation arise. The Parish team consists of Father

Geoff Pointer, Terry Kinsman and Carol Piggott. They are available to talk about and offer support on these issues. **One of them should always be called in the event of a suspicion of abuse occurring.**

### **3. WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE**

#### DEFINITION OF “CHILD”

The legal definition of a child is a young person under the age of 18 years (Children Act 1989). This policy relates to the protection of all children from harm.

#### DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

##### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse of a child may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of or deliberately causes ill-health to a child whom they are looking after.

##### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening, the activities may involve physical contact including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving child in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

##### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

##### **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing, failure to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, it may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.

(The definitions are those used in “Working Together to Safeguard Children”, HMSO 1999.)

### **4. HOW CAN WE MINIMISE THE RISK OF ABUSE TO CHILDREN WITHIN OUR PARISH?**

All who work with children in our parish must follow these guidelines (for example, those who conduct the Children’s Liturgy, or who work with the Servers, those engaged in preparing the sacraments and workers with the youth group).

#### **i) Guidelines for good practice when working with children.**

##### **(a) Before somebody is allowed to begin working with children:**

- All volunteers and employees working with children and young people must complete a form giving their personal details, documentary proof of identity, and supplying two

referees. They must also complete a form which requires information on criminal convictions and gives permission for a check to be made about any relevant criminal convictions.

- The necessary satisfactory checks and references should be received before a volunteer is engaged to work with children and young people of the parish.
- There will be a trial period of three months for all new volunteers, at the end of which both parties (the volunteer and the leader) review the situation.
- All volunteers will be given clear guidance about their roles and responsibilities. Supervision and training will be provided for inexperienced parish workers and volunteers.
- New parishioners who have already been vetted by a previous parish will also be required to undertake this procedure.
- Existing volunteers have already completed this procedure.

**(b) Essential general principles of good practice:**

**You must:**

- Provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow.
- Treat children and young people with appropriate respect.
- Respect a young person's right to personal privacy.
- Encourage young people and adults to feel sufficiently comfortable to point out attitudes and behaviour they do not like.
- Bear in mind that even well-intentioned actions might be open to misinterpretation.
- Be ready to challenge inappropriate behaviour on the part of others, and follow the procedures outlined below when there are suspicions or allegations of abuse.
- Give guidance and support to new or inexperienced helpers.
- Have other adults present, or at least within sight or hearing of others if you are planning any activities in relation to children or young people.

**You must not:**

- Have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children or young people.
- Make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children or young people.
- Respond to children's inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour.
- Show favouritism to, or cultivate, any particular individual.
- Take a chance when common sense, or the parish guidelines, suggest a more prudent approach should be followed.
- Exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues.
- Pre-judge, rationalise, dismiss or minimise information given to you.
- Believe that an accusation 'could never happen to me'.
- Imagine that your good name, or the Church, will protect you from any misunderstanding or accusation.

**(c) Physical contact when working with children:**

- Keep everything in public. A hug in the context of the group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child not the worker.

- Allow children to determine the degree of physical contact with others, except in exceptional circumstances such as when they need medical attention. Touch should be related to the child's needs, not the worker's.
- Do not engage in any physical contact which is, or could be construed as, sexually stimulating.
- Team members should take responsibility for monitoring one another in the area of physical contact. They should be free to challenge a colleague constructively if necessary. Concerns about physical abuse should be reported.

## ii) **Organisations and groups involving children:**

### (a) **When preparing to work with a group of children or vulnerable adults in the parish:**

- Anyone working with children or vulnerable adults must possess and have read their own copy of the Parish Policy, and know the procedures to follow in the case of suspected or alleged abuse (Copy of full Policy is kept in the **Catechetical Cupboard in the Parish Office**).
- Leaders need to think about what is involved in the activities for which they are responsible, so as to plan carefully to avoid any situations which could lead to difficulties, embarrassment, accusations or temptations.
- As far as possible, small group activities should take place in an open environment, or with doors left open. [An example of such a situation to avoid would be where one leader or worker and one young person are together 'in private' – whether that be in a 'counselling situation', on a residential weekend, or driving someone home in a car.]
- The parish will undertake Safeguarding Awareness sessions from time to time.

### (b) **Numbers of children and helpers:**

- It is desirable that the gender of parish workers and volunteers should reflect that of the children or young people, whenever possible.
- A minimum of two leaders/helpers must always be present. Leaders should make arrangements in advance for appropriate back up support to be available if possible e.g. from parents.

### (c) **Routine Group registration procedures:**

- An up to date register of information must be kept, with the names of all children, their addresses and home telephone numbers (AND Emergency contact number if different), and written permission to act *in loco parentis*. Keep in **Catechetical Cupboard in the Parish Office**
- At every meeting, a register must be kept with the names of all present: leaders, helpers / other adults, and children.
- Written information should be given to parents including the purpose of the group, and expectations of parents, including time of drop off / pick up, who to call if ill, the extent / limitations of Group leaders' responsibilities – and specifically that the leader cannot be left on their own with children, and parents may have to wait with their children until a second leader arrives.
- It must be ensured that there is adequate insurance cover, especially for activities away from the normal meeting place. Where minibuses and/or private cars are used there must be adequate insurance and the necessary permits.

**(d) Standard health and safety procedures:**

- In case of emergencies, leaders and helpers should know the location of the nearest telephone, of fire extinguishers and alarms and how to use them, and how to evacuate using the emergency exits.
- Any premises used are to be safe and well maintained (for example, leaders should check that fire extinguishers have been inspected within the last year)
- An incident log should be maintained for all group activities. The leader should ensure that any accident, or incident which causes concern, is recorded. This log should include the date and details of the accident or incident, the names of those involved, the action taken, and any future action required.

**(e) Additional considerations for activities organised away from the normal meeting place:**

- The ratio of helpers to children should be 1:5.
- A signed consent form must also be obtained from the child's parent/guardian/carer.
- The leader must ensure that someone else knows where the group is and how to make contact.

**iii Precautions when an Offender wishes to take part in Church services:**

Our prime concern is with the victim, but we must also offer pastoral care to the offender. A contract must be agreed with the offender which may detail requirements such as only visiting church at service times, not taking any role of authority, not being involved with any groups or activities likely to have children present, attending only at certain services etc, or taking part in services at another church.

**5. INITIAL CONTACT: ACTIONS UPON RECEIPT OF INFORMATION**

(Applicable to **ALL ROLES**, but except in very urgent cases these actions will only be undertaken upon the direction of the Parish Safeguarding Team who will seek advice from **Social Services, Diocese Safeguarding or other agencies as needed**)

**KEY PRINCIPLES**

If any person reasonably suspects that a child is being, has been or is likely to be abused, they **must** take action (see **Initial Contact**). To do nothing is never an option.

The actions of those who first handle allegations and concerns are most important. They will sometimes dictate the effectiveness of a subsequent enquiry.

Under no circumstances should the alleged abuser be alerted at this stage, whether directly or indirectly. Important evidence may be lost.

If an enquiry is frustrated at this early stage, the result will be the failure to acquire sufficient information upon which to base decisions to protect children from harm.

The aim of the process which follows is to reach a point where the fullest possible information has been gathered. Formal investigations will be carried out by the Police or Social Services. It is only with the benefit of complete information that children may be protected through careful assessment of risk, based on fact and professional judgement.

The guiding principles for any person in receipt of information about a concern or an allegation should be:

**LISTEN**

**RECORD**

**REFER**

Sometimes information will be in the form of observations made by the person recording the allegation or concern.

## **GENERAL PROCEDURE**

### **LISTEN**

**The following is GUIDANCE about listening to those who give information about child abuse.**

Where information is given in person, listen and accept what is said seriously. Do not pre-judge, rationalise, dismiss or minimise. Do not make judgemental statements about any person involved.

Be aware that a person's ability to recount his or her concern or allegation will depend on age, culture, nationality and upon any disability which may affect use of language and range of vocabulary. Do not suggest words, but use theirs.

Adopt a listening style which is compassionate, calm and reassuring. If the information given to you shocks, disgusts or distresses you, do not allow these feelings to show. If you do, you may inadvertently dissuade the person from giving any further information.

Avoid statements about your belief or otherwise of the information given. Use phrases like "I will take what you say seriously."

Do not promise total confidentiality. If this is proposed as a condition of giving information about possible child abuse, such confidence must be refused.

Ask an adult: "In whose best interests is it to keep this secret?"

Explain to a child: "I will only tell people whose job it is to keep children safe."

Do not make any promises about future events.

Explain what will happen next (see **REFER** section below.) Indicate who will be made aware of the information which has been given by them. Leave contact details of yourself and any other appropriate person in case the referrer needs to ask questions later.

An adult who provides information should be encouraged to share their information, where appropriate (see: 3.3), with the Statutory Authorities. Support should be offered in doing so. Where this is refused, explain that you will have to report the matter on his or her behalf and give reasons.

If those who give information ask if it is possible to remain anonymous, explain that this may affect how seriously information is taken by the Statutory Authorities and what use may be made of it. Such Authorities will respect a request that the identity of an informant be kept confidential, but cannot guarantee that other parties will not deduce it in the course of an investigation.

### **Listening Skills**

Listening means not interrupting. Allowing silences for a person to find the words to express themselves. Deciding to tell is often a traumatic decision to make, certainly for a child, but also for an adult abused as a child, or any adult who may be uncertain about the consequences of passing on information.

Listening does not mean questioning beyond checking that you have understood what has been said. It is the job of the Statutory Authorities (Police or Social Services) to investigate. There must be no probing for detail beyond that which has been freely given.

Explain that a professional person will need to hear what they have to say and that it is not necessary to give their account in detail until such an interview takes place, with their agreement.

Listening does not mean telling a person to stop when they are freely recalling events: because some facts are only ever told once, the information given must be fully and accurately recorded. However, it is better that such detail is given directly to a professional from one of the Statutory Authorities, to allow proper procedures to be observed and to avoid the distress of having to repeat the account more than once.

## Listening to a Child or Young Person

The above paragraph is especially important where children or young people give information. Video-recording of child interviews by the Statutory Authorities means that the child or young person gives the account only once and detail is properly recorded in a legally accepted way.

Never arrange to interview a child or young person. If you are notified that a child or young person may have information about abuse, the matter must be referred directly to the Statutory Authorities. They will conduct the interview. This includes where one child or young person has information about the abuse of another.

If a child or young person begins speaking in detail about incidents of abuse, gently explain that another person will need to hear this important information, thank them for telling and ask them to save the rest of what they have to say until a person is contacted who can help make the behaviour stop. Do not make promise about future events.

Investigative interviewing of children is a highly skilled job undertaken by trained social workers and police officers. Inappropriate questioning by an untrained person is likely seriously to prejudice an investigation for criminal purposes, and even where there are no criminal proceedings, will lead to information being recorded which may be unreliable.

## Listening to a person who admits abusing a child or young person

The above guidance may also be applied to instances where a person admits abusing a child or children.

It is necessary to tell a person who admits an offence against a child or young person that such information cannot be kept confidential.

A Priest must be clear about the status of such a conversation. Make sure there is no misunderstanding about whether the seal on confession applies.

Be supportive, but do not seek further detail. A person who gives information which could incriminate him or her should have access to legal advice. It is not your job to interview, but simply to listen.

Explain you have a duty to pass on the information to the Statutory Authorities for child protection purposes, unless you judge that such a statement may put a child at risk of harm. The motivation for admitting what has happened may be a desire to address the problem and obtain help. The avenue which enables this to happen and at the same time protects children is the criminal justice avenue in the first instance.

Children or young people who abuse other child or young people need intervention and therapy in order to help them to change their offending behaviour before it becomes entrenched in adulthood. Consequently, referrals of such behaviour must be made to the Statutory Authorities in the same way as for adults.

Children who abuse will need to be considered by the Statutory Authorities as possible victims and their own needs as children will be addressed in addition to their offending behaviour.

## RECORD

Whenever possible and practical, take notes during the conversation. Always ask permission to do this and explain the importance of recording all information.

Where it is not appropriate to make notes at the time, make a written record as soon as possible afterwards and in any case **before the end of the day**. Download a blank reporting form from CSAS Website (Form Library - R Alleg 1) <http://www.csasprocedures.uk.net/chapters/forms.html> This initial recording will form the first entry in a file of information about the case which will be retained by the Diocese Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

Record the time, date, location (or e.g. by letter, by telephone) and persons present. The record should be signed and dated by the author.

Your record must use direct speech wherever possible with actual words used. Do not make assumptions about the intended meaning of words used.

Do not be selective. Include detail which to you may seem irrelevant. It may prove invaluable at a later stage in an investigation.

Include information about the circumstance of the referral, observations made and any background information which is considered relevant. Opinion may be included, though it must be specified as such.

Maintain a log of actions on the reporting form and record times, dates, names and contact details of persons spoken to and any advice received or agreement reached. It is important to include full details of referrals to Police or Social Services.

All original records, including rough notes, will be passed (by the Parish Safeguarding Team) **by noon the next working day** to the Diocese Safeguarding Co-ordinator. Records must be kept secure and confidential and will not be copied unless strictly necessary for child protection purposes.

## REFER

(See CSAS website flowchart)

The overriding principle of referral is as follows:

“If somebody believes that a child may be suffering, or may be at risk of suffering significant harm, then s/he should always refer his or her concerns to the local authority social services department. In addition to the social services department, the Police and the NSPCC have powers to intervene in these circumstances.” - But except in emergency, **first contact the Parish Safeguarding Team.**

“Significant harm” is not defined. Sexual abuse is always regarded as such. For other forms of abuse, advice should be sought from the Diocese Safeguarding Co-ordinator where there is any doubt.

## 6. CONCERN OR ALLEGATION?

### CONCERNS

Where a concern exists that a child may be being abused, have been abused or be at risk of abuse, such a concern must initially be treated in the same way as an allegation (see below).

Only where the concern is, on the available information, no more than an incident of non-criminal behaviour or a breach of policy for Creating a Safe Environment will a referral to the Statutory Authorities be unnecessary. Some behaviour may indicate that an adult is “grooming” a child for abuse. In such cases a concern may exist that a child is at risk of abuse. Refer to the Diocese Safeguarding Co-ordinator promptly so that further action may be considered.

**Do not alert** the person about whom concern has been raised. The Diocese Safeguarding Co-ordinator will agree a plan of action.

Information connected with a child protection concern is confidential and may only be shared with those who need to know in order or take action to protect children, e.g. Diocese Safeguarding Co-ordinator, Congregation leader or his or her deputy, or other manager.

### ALLEGATIONS

**Refer to a Member of the Parish Safeguarding Team, who will consider further referral to other bodies.**

Where there is an allegation by any person that a child may be being abused, have been abused or be at risk of abuse, there must be referral to the Statutory Authorities **immediately on receipt of information.**

**Do not alert the alleged abuser**, either directly or indirectly. To do so is likely to frustrate any subsequent investigation and may result in further risk to a child involved in the case.

Any contact must take place **only** after liaison with and agreement from the Statutory Authorities.

In normal circumstances, the referral to the Statutory Authorities will be made by the Parish Safeguarding Team or Diocese Safeguarding Co-ordinator. Any person receiving information about an allegation must also hand over to the Team any records made.

In emergency any person can refer to the authorities where urgent action is required to protect a child or children. It is important to ensure that information is referred to **both** Police and to Social Services. This is especially relevant when adults report abuse as a child and current child protection issues may not be immediately apparent.

Where referral has been made to the Statutory Authorities by a person other than the Diocese Safeguarding Co-ordinator, all information must be passed to the Diocese Safeguarding Co-ordinator **by noon the next working day** and followed up in writing.

### **Where abuse within the child's family or household is suspected.**

Referral to Police and Social Services must be made **immediately**.

Await advice from Police or Social Services about what communication should take place with the child's household or family or what arrangements should be made for the child to return home. To act independently may frustrate enquiries and fail to protect the child from further abuse.

## **7. URGENT ACTION, RECORDING and CONFIDENTIALITY**

### **IN AN EMERGENCY**

If a child is **at risk of immediate harm, is physically injured or it is thought that sexual abuse has occurred within the last 24 hours, contact Police and Social Services immediately**, giving full information. There should be staff available from either agency who can respond at any time of day or night.

Seek medical help where necessary. Give medical staff relevant information about the allegation or concern.

Contact **Parish Safeguarding Team** at first opportunity.

### **RECORDING**

In all cases a record must be made of the incident / suspicion including all actions taken, adding time, date and signature, The report must be passed immediately to a member of the **Parish Safeguarding Team (who will manage referral to other bodies)** as soon as possible and in any case **by noon the next working day** and must be kept securely and confidently.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING**

All information connected with a child protection enquiry is confidential within the multi-agency network. No information should be shared with any person who does not need to know for the purposes of protecting children and facilitating the conducting of an effective investigation.

If an alleged abuser wishes to be informed of information held about him or her in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act or their Human Rights, explain that you are not permitted to comply with their request at this stage and refer them to the Diocese Safeguarding Co-ordinator (see below).

The law allows particular information to be withheld from the subject of such information for the prevention and detection of crime.

The (Parish or) Diocese Safeguarding Co-ordinator will record full details of all decisions regarding information-sharing, giving reasons in the log of actions for inclusion in the case file. In this way, any later challenges may be answered.

The welfare of the child is paramount. Children, as well as adults, have human rights.

Those with whom information **may** be shared include:

Police

Social Services or NSPCC

Other statutory agencies, e.g. Health, Education

Local CP Representative

Diocese Safeguarding Co-ordinator or member of CP Commission

Bishop or Congregation Leader

CSAS professional staff

All of whom are required to keep information confidential within the boundaries of inter-agency professional confidentiality.

Other, such as the parish Priest or Pastoral Link Person may need to be given information, but not at this initial stage.

Consider: Does the person **NEED** to know the information?

Does the person need to know **ALL** the information?

Does the person need to know the information **NOW**?

Record what information has been provided and to whom, with reasons.

## 8. GUIDANCE ON VULNERABLE ADULT SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES

Where Eucharistic Ministers (and other Parish Volunteers) go out into the community to bring support and succour to parishioners in their own homes (or in the care of others), they need to take special care to ensure the safety of vulnerable adults they may encounter.

As with children, we as a Parish need to take extra care over how we safeguard parishioners who by age or infirmity are themselves vulnerable, and indeed how we safeguard ourselves. This process is a necessary one if we are to give credibility and security to our catholic community of Bearsted / Harrietsham as a whole.

### Who is vulnerable?

Any adult who may not be best able to make their own decisions, or stand up for their own interests. This includes adults who are infirm, either physically or mentally, through ill health or advancing years. It includes those who are healthy but due to age (or mental ability) may not be up to resisting the will of others, or who may be unduly influenced by pressure from others.

### What abuse may they be they exposed to?

- Physical abuse  
Assault (evidence of bruising, unexplained injuries, deprivation of necessities)
- Mental abuse
- Harrassment (undue pressure – not necessarily unfriendly)
- Financial abuse (undue gifts, bequests, denial of funds)

### Who could be the abuser?

- a) the Eucharistic Minister
- b) the person's family / friends
- c) care workers / supporters / other workers visiting the vulnerable person

### What can we do about it?

- We can protect the community by checking the Eucharistic Ministers
- Eucharistic ministers must operate according to safe working practices
- Eucharistic ministers must pass on concerns to the Child / Vulnerable **Adult Parish Protection Team (APT)** if they ever suspect abuse may be occurring.

Eucharistic ministers (and Volunteers) who go out into the community are checked through the national Criminal Record Bureau (CRB), in line with most other voluntary groups and bodies across the country. It is a safeguard for the children / vulnerable adults in our care, but also for themselves too – in the knowledge that they have a certificate of good character, and are following the Parish guidelines of safe working practices. It also gives a certificate which can be taken elsewhere to establish good character in other fields of work.

### Safe working practices for Eucharistic Ministers

- Be aware – these things DO happen here in Bearsted – not somewhere else!
- Look out for signs of assault;  
(Unexplained bruising, difficulty in walking / moving, unusual reticence)
- Do relatives / others not want you to be on your own with the person? Why?
- Do not accept gifts (except things of only a token value)
- Tell one of the APT if you do accept something – the person may later allege that the item has been stolen (albeit in good faith – failing memory)
- Do not agree to advise / be a recipient of any legacy in a will – you MUST tell the APT if you suspect this could become a possibility

- Never promise not to tell anyone what you are told – you must say you will tell the APT but that it will be confidential
- Consider – are you best on your own?  
(Male / female mix? Mental state, valuable items in house)
- **Any** concern **MUST** be mentioned to team, even if it is just a suspicion – it may protect someone else, incl other Eucharistic Ministers!
- **If in any doubt talk to your APT!**

## **Disclosure**

If a parishioner wants to tell you about a possible abuse:

- Remain calm, don't express surprise, disapproval or disbelief
- Be sympathetic
- Reassure the person – they have done right in telling you, you are treating it seriously, its not their fault
- Do not promise to keep secrets
- Do not contact the alleged abuser / witnesses
- Tell one of the APT immediately, even if you are not sure how serious / genuine your fear is
- Don't discuss with other Eucharistic ministers

## **VULNERABLE ADULT - ABUSE AND ITS INDICATORS**

(Extract of main points which give signs of abuse. Not an exhaustive list)

### **Physical Abuse**

Hitting, slapping, scratching

Pushing or rough handling

Assault and battery

Restraining without justifiable reasons

Misuse of medication

Inappropriate sanctions (eg depriving food, warmth, clothing, health care)

#### **Indicators:**

History of unexplained falls / minor injuries (esp in different stages of healing)

Unexplained bruising in well protected body areas eg inside thighs

Any unexplained bruising or injury

Unusual burn marks (eg cigarette, rope burns)

History of frequent GP changes or reluctance to visit GP

Accumulation of prescribed (but not taken) medicines

Malnutrition, bed sores, being left in wet clothing

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual activity which an adult cannot or has not consented to or been pressured to enter into

Sexual activity when client is unaware of the risks / consequences

Rape or attempted rape

Sexual assault or harassment

Non contact abuse eg voyeurism / pornography

#### **Indicators**

Unexplained changes in demeanour and behaviour

Tendency to withdraw and spend time in isolation

Expression of explicit sexual behaviour / language which is out of character

Irregular or disturbed sleep pattern

Bruising or bleeding to rectal or genital areas

Torn or stained underclothing especially with blood or semen  
Sexually transmitted disease or pregnancy where person cannot give sexual consent

### **Psychological Abuse**

Emotional abuse  
Verbal abuse  
Humiliation and ridicule  
Threats of punishment, abandonment, intimidation or exclusion from services  
Isolation or withdrawal from services and support networks  
Deliberate denial of religious or cultural needs  
Failure to provide access to appropriate social skills / educational development training

#### **Indicators**

Inability to sleep, tendency to spend long hours in bed  
Overeating or loss of appetite  
Anxiety, confusion or general resignation  
Fearfulness or loss of self esteem  
Becoming manipulative, uncooperative or aggressive

### **Financial Abuse**

Misuse or theft of money  
Fraud or extortion of material assets  
Misuse or appropriation of property, possessions or benefits

#### **Indicators**

Unexplained inability to pay for shopping, household bills  
Unexplained withdrawal of large sums of money  
Personal possessions go missing from home  
Substandard living conditions given apparent financial position  
Unusual level of interest in person's assets by family / carer / friend

### **Neglect and Acts of Omission (by Carer / Family / Friend)**

Ignoring medical or physical care needs  
Failure to access proper care / equipment for functional independence  
Failure to give prescribed medication  
Failure to provide health / social / educational care  
Neglect of accommodation, lighting, heating  
Failure to give privacy and dignity  
Professional neglect

**SAFEGUARDING**

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Diocese: Southwark Catholic Diocese

Parish: St Peter & The Good Shepherd, Bearsted & Harrietsham

**STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**

**INCIDENT/CONCERN REPORT FORM**

**Information received at:** *(time)*..... on *(date)* .....

By *(insert name)* .....

Role: .....

Telephone Number: .....

Information received: by telephone / by letter / in person / by e-mail *(delete as necessary)*

**This was form completed by:** .....

on: *(insert date)* .....

All relevant documents should be retained securely and forwarded by the Parish Safeguarding team to the Diocese Safeguarding Coordinator with this form as soon possible.

**Alleged Victim/Survivor, Child or Young Person**

Name: .....

Age/Date of Birth: ..... Gender: Male/Female *(delete as necessary)*

Address: .....

.....

Telephone Number: .....

**Applicable to children only:**

Name of Parent/Guardian: .....

Telephone Number: .....

**Information received from:**

Name: .....

Role: .....

Address: .....

.....  
Telephone Number: .....

---

**Alleged person responsible for incident/concern:**

Name: .....

Role: .....

Age/Date of Birth: .....

Address: .....

.....

Telephone Number: .....

---

**Information**

Record details of incident(s) or concern(s). If information is given in person, record the location of the conversation and identities of persons present.

**Completed by:** (signature) .....

**Actions and Further Information**

Record all actions taken and information received with times and dates, entries to be signed.

Time/Date		Signature