Local Survivor Strategy

Supporting survivors and victims of abuse in the Diocese of Bath and Wells

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# Foreword

During my professional career now spanning over two decades, I have worked with vast numbers of victims, survivors and their families of domestic murder convictions, sexual and violent offending, intimate partner violence and a range of abuse against children and vulnerable adults. As Safeguarding Manager for the Diocese of Bath and Wells I am very aware that victim and survivors of abuse I now support can be deeply harmed in ways that are not seen in these other arenas. The loss of trust and the damage to one’s spirituality can be so deeply impacting.

Over the past two years I have undertaken a range of conversations with survivors, academics and charities working with children and vulnerable adults to try and develop a local approach that can give confidence to people who wish to come forward that they will be heard, respected, and supported.

I thank everyone who has contributed to this discussion, which remains an ongoing dialogue, as we look to continue to develop and enhance our support.

Ben Goodhind  
Safeguarding Manager  
Diocese of Bath and Wells

# Introduction

* 1. Our commitment  
     The Diocese of Bath and Wells is fully committed to the Church of England’s Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse Policy. When victims and survivors disclose to us, we will engage actively with them and ensure effective working partnerships are in place to deliver an effective and considerate service to them.
  2. What we respond to   
     The diocesan Safeguarding team responds to concerns raised about the abuse or neglect of children and vulnerable adults in an Anglican faith setting or where someone’s behaviour indicates they pose a risk of doing so. (Please see appendix A for further information.)
  3. Policy aims  
     This policy aims to reflect the local response of the Diocese of Bath and Wells to survivors and to provide clarity about how we manage disclosures in our area.

# Disclosure

* 1. When reporting abuse, victims and survivors are heard, understood, respected, taken seriously, genuinely cared for, and met with belief.
  2. The response to safeguarding disclosures is victim and survivor-centred and trauma-informed.
  3. Victims, survivors, and church officers are made aware of the routes to disclosure and the process that will be followed if someone reports abuse, including how personal information, data, and dignity are protected. The person taking the disclosure will ensure that good quality records are kept.
  4. Safeguarding concerns are acted on appropriately, transparently and in a timely manner, keeping victims and survivors informed of progress throughout. This will include a timely referral to statutory agencies where required. If there is an immediate risk of harm or an indication that a crime has been committed the diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) must inform the police immediately.
  5. When receiving disclosure, the DSO must decide if it is a safeguarding matter and as such triage the concern. Where it is deemed to not be a safeguarding concern the DSO will signpost the person making the disclosure to any other relevant organisation or department. (See Appendix A)

# Support

* 1. All survivors will be offered a support worker. Where allegations are being managed (via internal investigation or criminal justice processes) survivors will be offered an independent survivors advocate through our service level agreement with FearFree. <https://www.fearfree.org.uk/>  
       
     FearFree are an independent charity who support survivors of domestic and sexual abuse. An advocate will support survivors by explaining the process that is being undertaken with their case, walk them through the process, ensure their views are heard and rights are protected and be a point of contact between them and the diocese. If the survivor would rather have a support worker provided by the church, that can be put in place.

3.2 All survivors will be offered the opportunity to access therapy. This may either be via the diocesan therapy team who can support the survivor in accessing a range of self-employed therapists or if the survivor already has a fully registered therapist, the payment of some of those sessions can be considered.

3.3 Where therapy is required, an initial consultation with the diocesan therapy lead will be offered in order to assess the survivor’s needs and ensure the right type of therapist, in an appropriate location, is provided. A treatment plan will be agreed and between 8 and 12 sessions offered by agreement with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO), depending on the needs identified. An enhanced level of therapy may be provided incorporating further sessions should that need be identified. Decisions on the amount of therapy offered will be made by the budget holder who in this case is the DSO.

3.4 The therapists will work with survivors under their own confidentiality process. Please note that whilst therapists work to strict codes of confidentiality, where there is an immediate risk identified to the survivor or others, they will need to report the safeguarding team.

3.5 The diocese acknowledges that some survivors coming forward do not hold an active faith or that their faith has been impacted by their experience of abuse. Where there is an expressed wish to access spiritual support, as well as support returning to active worship this will be offered. Any reference to the Bible and Christian theology with the survivor will only take place with the survivor’s consent, always with sensitivity and only with the hope of providing spiritual care and support.

3.6 Where survivors hold an active faith, pastoral support within their church will be made available should that be requested.

3.7 Where survivors have other needs or concerns across broader areas, or from alternative organisations, they will be appropriately supported in accessing local, relevant support.

3.8 Survivors will also be signposted to national survivor resources and organisations including:

* [Safe Spaces England and Wales](https://www.safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk/)
* [The Church of England Interim Support Scheme](https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-news-releases/interim-support-scheme)
* [The Church of England Redress Scheme](https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/redress-scheme)

# 4. Expectations

4.1 Limits of confidentiality.  
The person receiving a disclosure should not make promises that can’t be kept regarding confidentiality. Where dealing with serious allegations these must be reported to the diocesan Safeguarding Officer regardless of consent. When the safety of individuals is it at risk, this is not a breach of data protection legislation.

4.2 Responding to anonymous concerns and allegations.  
When investigating allegations against clergy, church officers, staff or volunteers the managing allegations against church officer practice guidance states that they should be made aware of the full details of the allegation so that they are able to comment fairly on what has been alleged. Whilst acknowledging the many complex reasons why people want to maintain anonymity, it is important to be honest that this may restrict the Safeguarding team’s ability to intervene.

4.3 Investigating and managing concerns.   
‘While the safeguarding team will always act professionally and with a victim and survivor-centred approach, they do have limited capacity and as such, investigations can take some time to conclude. This should be communicated to the survivor honestly from the start.

5. Domestic abuse

5.1 The Diocese of Bath and Wells is committed to responding well to domestic abuse. Please see our Domestic Abuse Statement which can be found on the [Safeguarding section of the diocesan website](https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/safeguarding) or appendix B.

# Appendix A - Abuse and neglect of children and adults

The abuse of children, young people and adults can take many forms. Everyone has the same right to protection regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. Children, young people and adults from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities (physical, sensory and/or learning difficulties) are especially vulnerable and need special care and protection.

The diocesan Safeguarding team (DST) will manage allegations against church/cathedral officers where the victim meets one of the vulnerability criteria below or where the allegation is one of the specific cases listed below.

## Safeguarding vulnerability definitions

**Children**

All children, under 18, are considered to be vulnerable. Any allegation of abuse or neglect of a child should be referred to the DST.

**Adults**

1.Care Act

Statutory Guidance issued under the Care Act 2014 (14.2) by the Department of Health uses the term ‘adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect’ to assess eligibility to statutory social care services.

(a) has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs),

(b) is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and

(c) as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

Any allegation of abuse or neglect of an “adult at risk” should be referred to the Safeguarding Team.

For the purpose of Church policy and guidance the definition of ‘vulnerable adult’ is contained in the [Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure (2016)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/2016/1/section/6), which defines a ‘vulnerable adult’ as “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”.

In cases where the adult is not “at risk” under the statutory definition but maybe considered “vulnerable” under the church definition it will be necessary to assess whether their ability to protect themselves is “significantly impaired”.

**Specific cases for which the DST will manage allegations:**

1. **Sexual abuse allegations**Sexual abuse allegations will require the involvement of the DST, to assist with multi-agency liaison and risk assessment. If the alleged victim meets the vulnerability criteria above then the case could be led by the DST but if not, the DST will support whoever is managing the allegation e.g. the Archdeacon or Director of HR.
2. **Physical abuse allegations**   
   Physical Abuse allegations will require the involvement of the DST, to assist with multi-agency liaison and risk assessment. If the alleged victim meets the vulnerability criteria above then the case could be led by the DST but if not, the DST will support whoever is managing the allegation e.g. the Archdeacon or Director of HR.
3. **Domestic abuse**  
   Domestic abuse allegations will require the involvement of the DST, to assist with multi-agency liaison and risk assessment.
4. **Bullying**Most cases of bullying in the workplace are unlikely to meet the threshold for psychological abuse. Where the bullying does not meet this threshold, the behaviour would be more appropriately dealt with by HR or Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM) processes. For cases that have been referred to the DST, the Diocesan Safeguarding Manager will make a decision and refer to the appropriate department where necessary.
5. **Spiritual abuse**   
   Spiritual abuse would fall under the responsibility of the DST if the spiritual abuse was a sub-category of other abuse, e.g. psychological abuse, sexual abuse, or domestic abuse. The use of scripture as part of an allegation of verbal bullying would not necessarily require case management by the DST and as above, may be best dealt with by HR or the Archdeacon.
6. **Modern slavery and human trafficking**  
   This does not specifically fall under the DST but the DST will assist with multi-agency liaison and advice.

## Management of sex offenders

The DST will be responsible for the multi-agency liaison and risk assessment of sex offenders that attend church. If a sex offender is attending the Cathedral, a small group (known as the reference group) will be made aware and become signatories to the safety plan to carry out the risk management plan.

## Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse can encompass all of the above within a relationship context. Children witnessing domestic abuse are considered victims, as well as those being abused.

Please consider completing the Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse training for further clarity on this subject, available on the Church of England Safeguarding Training Portal, free of charge. In addition, the [Responding Well to Domestic Abuse Policy and Practice Guidance](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-12/RespondingWellWeb.pdf), by the Church of England, provides detailed information on forms of domestic abuse, the impact of this and best practice in responding.

# Appendix B - Diocese of Bath and Wells Domestic Abuse Statement

Foreword

I once spoke to a parish priest who’d asked officers at his local police station about the most common concerns, they met in their day-to-day work. ‘Simple sir,’ came the reply, ‘It’s domestic abuse and mental health’. How many of us would have guessed that would be the answer? Because for so much of the time, these most significant issues in the lives of our communities, and domestic abuse particularly, are hidden in plain sight.

Yet as the response of local police shows, domestic abuse is all around us. That’s why I am so glad to commend this domestic abuse policy that has been developed for our Diocese of Bath and Wells. It shines a light on this issue and invites us to make a response. What might that be? An answer comes in Psalm 147 which says of God:

‘He heals the broken-hearted,  
and binds up their wounds.  
He determines the number of the stars;  
he gives to all of them their names.’

Our calling is to join with God in bringing wholeness to a broken world of which domestic violence is such a feature. We are to be those who heal the broken hearted and who bind up wounds. This policy encourages us to get on with that work. The Psalmist also speaks of a God who sees everything. Just as he sees and names the stars, he sees the damage done among individuals, families and communities by domestic violence. Our task is to see and act on this issue too.

I’m hugely grateful to those who have framed this policy that’s created for us all to adopt and work with. I commend it to you.

+Michael

The Rt Revd Michael Beasley  
Bishop of Bath and Wells

1. **Introduction**

All forms of domestic abuse are wrong and must stop. We are committed to promoting and supporting safer environments which:

* ensure that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse
* work to protect those experiencing domestic abuse
* recognise equality amongst people and within relationships
* refuse to condone any form of abuse
* enable and encourage concerns to be raised and responded to openly and consistently in accordance with practice guidance.

1. **Policy Statement**

We recognise that:

* all forms of domestic abuse cause damage to the survivor and express an imbalance of power in the relationship
* all survivors (regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity) have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
* domestic abuse can occur in all communities
* domestic abuse may be a single incident, but is usually a systematic repeated pattern which escalates in severity and frequency
* domestic abuse, if witnessed or overheard by a child, is a form of abuse by the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour
* working in partnership with children, adults and other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of any child or adult suffering abuse.

1. **Diocesan response**

We will respond to domestic abuse:

**In all our activities by:**

* valuing, listening to and respecting both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse, whilst appreciating the need to ensure a distance is kept between the two and refusing to condone the perpetration or continuation of any form of abuse.

**In our publicity by:**

* raising awareness about other agencies, support services, resources and expertise, through providing information in public and women-only areas of relevance to survivors, children and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse
* Providing Awareness of Domestic Abuse Training for all volunteers eligible for Basic Safeguarding Training to ensure we develop a robust culture that promotes safety and awareness of how to respond
* The Diocesan Safeguarding team will work with the National Safeguarding team to further develop training for responding to domestic abuse and ensure knowledge and awareness remains current.

**When concerns are raised by:**

* ensuring that those who have experienced abuse can find safety and informed help
* working with the appropriate statutory bodies during an investigation into domestic abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the church community.

**In our care by**

* ensuring that informed and appropriate pastoral care is offered to any child, young person or adult who has suffered abuse
* identifying and outlining the appropriate relationship of those with pastoral care responsibilities with both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse
* Providing where possible transformative interventions with perpetrators of domestic abuse who are not able to access this through statutory agencies

We are committed to reviewing our policy and procedures regularly.

1. **Advice and support**

The Diocese of Bath and Wells Safeguarding team will provide advice and support for individuals, Parishes and church bodies.

* The Safeguarding team will provide advice and support to anyone experiencing or concerned about domestic abuse, for themselves or for others.
* All concerns reported to the Diocese in respect of Church officers and domestic abuse will be monitored and recorded by the Diocese Safeguarding Team.
* Support is available to all Parishes in implementing a Domestic Abuse policy and related practice Guidance.
* Training is provided by the Diocese for those in leadership, safeguarding and pastoral positions in the Diocese and Parishes.
* The Diocese will work in partnership with specialist agencies including Police, Local Authorities, Community Safety Partnerships to support victims and survivors of Domestic Abuse.
* The Bishop of Bath and Wells seeks to support the spouses and partners of clergy whose relationships have broken down irretrievably and are separating. They are offered, by invitation, contact with and the support of a Bishop’s Visitor. This offer is facilitated by the Bishop’s Chaplain. Whilst there is no assumption that domestic abuse will have been a contributory factor in the break-up of the relationship, Bishop’s Visitors will be cognisant of this policy and will respond appropriately to any disclosures of abuse.

1. **Independent advice and support**

* The Diocesan Safeguarding team are available to provide independent unbiased sensitive and discrete advice and guidance. However, the Diocese of Bath and Wells also supports and encourages anyone who may be experiencing, or are concerned about domestic abuse for themselves or others, to seek advice and support completely independent to the Diocese if they would prefer to speak with a specialist adviser outside of the Church.
* We commend the recognised specialist support services to anyone seeking such independent support or advice [Domestic abuse (somerset.gov.uk)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/domestic-abuse/).

To contact a member of our Diocesan Safeguarding Team please visit this link [Bath and Wells Diocese | Safeguarding](https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/parish-support/safeguarding/)

To access further safeguarding resources please visit this link [Bath and Wells Diocese | National guidance](https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/parish-support/safeguarding/national-guidance/)

To access Domestic Abuse Awareness Training please visit this link [Safeguarding Training Portal (cofeportal.org)](https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/)

Policy Author: Ben Goodhind Diocesan Safeguarding Manager 10/09/2024

Next Review Date 10/09/2025