

Safeguarding for Spiritual Directors

Some reminders from C1

- Every one is welcome in our Church communities but be vigilant
- Every member of the congregation and each member of staff (paid or unpaid, ordained or lay) has a safeguarding responsibility
- Know who the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser is and how to contact them
- Know the signs of abuse in children and vulnerable adults
- Don't hesitate to discuss issues with the Safeguarding Team
- You have a duty to refer if concerned

(Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 and The Care Act 2014)

Safeguarding and caring are embedded in pastoral care and therefore within spiritual direction.

Safeguarding children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable includes:

- Protecting their rights to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect
- Protecting them from maltreatment or things that are bad for their health or development
- People and organisations working together to prevent the risk of abuse or neglect, and to stop them from happening
- Making sure people's wellbeing is promoted, taking their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs into account

In this session, with reference to spiritual direction, we will review:

- The nature of our meeting in Spiritual Direction
- Some areas of disclosure
- Responding to disclosures
- Confidentiality
- Note taking and security

Spiritual direction 1:

You are due to meet with someone at your home for the first time. They are new to the idea of spiritual direction. This is someone who has approached you directly without seeing the spirituality advisor first, so no one has met with them in this way before.

- What do you need to be aware of as you meet with them?
- What are the potential risks for both parties?
- What measures do you take to keep yourself safe?
- For you, what would constitute unacceptable or challenging behavior?

Spiritual Direction 2:

After the initial meeting you both agree to continue the relationship. This is a woman, married to a clergy man, with two children aged 12 and 10 years old. You discover over the next session a little more about this person and you develop a sense that she is quite vulnerable in some as yet undefined way.

She finds talking about and life and faith helpful, and the relationship is established. She begins to request that you meet more frequently, and then begins to email you in between sessions.

- What are the dangers here?
- What might you have done to prevent getting to this point?
- How do you respond now?

Spiritual Direction 3

The relationship steadies into a regular meeting every 8 weeks. She talks easily and obviously trusts you, and you begin to discover that the marriage is what she describes as 'quite difficult'.

About 10 months into your relationship, she arrives one day a little late, which is unusual. You notice that her usual careful appearance is a little unkempt.

During the course of the session, her mood seems low and she is quite tearful at times, whilst not really being able to attribute her feelings to anything in particular.

- What might these circumstances leave you to wonder?
- What might you pay attention to when you next meet?

Meeting people with mental health issues in spiritual direction is common. However it is rare that we come across them in an acute or florid way.

Boundaries of what we do:

Not therapeutic and do not offer counselling.....

We listen and hear the context and try to enable people to be reconciled to what is happening to them and to find a rightful dependence upon and turning towards God within it.

Spiritual Direction 4

At your next meeting, this persists, and her mood is now very 'flat'.

She seems to have lost interest in what she normally does, and say that she can't concentrate on anything and is very tired all the time.

- How do you respond?
- What might you do?

Mental Health crisis

If you have serious concerns someone needs to know.

Try to gain agreement of the individual but if they will not seek help, you must tell someone.

In event of major crisis where someone is in imminent danger then phone 999 or 111

There is a mental health crisis team available through 111.

Spiritual Direction 5

At your next meeting some two months later, she has been to see her GP and has started some antidepressant medication, which she feels is helping and indeed she does seem more like herself.

A year or two passes and this is someone who you now begin to feel you know quite well.

One day she arrives distressed and agitated. When you have given her space to name what is going on, she says 'It can't go on like this..' And begins to tell you how her husband has been 'cruel' to her and 'unkind' to the children.

- How do you respond?
- Given the history you are aware of, what might be going on?

Definition of domestic abuse

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse perpetrated by those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

The Church recognises additional categories of neglect: spiritual and electronic abuse.

Source: [Home Office circular 003/2013](#)

At the heart

At the heart of domestic abuse is the **abuse of power** over another person and a **desire to control** another person

This is the opposite of the love and freedom that Christ offers us



Power and Control

The link between safeguarding of both children and vulnerable adults with domestic abuse is clear in the types of abuse experienced. Domestic abuse is about **power and control**.

The abuse can take many forms, but the following headings are sometimes used:

- Making threats
- Intimidation
- Economic/Financial Abuse
- Using isolation
- Emotional Abuse
- Being domineering within partnership/relationship
- Using the children
- Minimising/denying own behaviour
- Physical/sexual violence



What is controlling and coercive behaviour?

Controlling behaviour

Is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour

Coercive behaviour

Is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim

Women and Men are abused

- Overall, 27.1% of women and 13.2% of men had experienced any domestic abuse since the age of 16, equivalent to an estimated 4.5 million female victims and 2.2 million male victims

(Crime Survey for England and Wales, March 2015)

- Domestic abuse occurs in the lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender community. It is estimated that about 25% of LGBT people suffer through violent or threatening relationships with partners or ex-partners

Church of England Commitments on Domestic Abuse 2017

The Church of England is committed to raising awareness about domestic abuse and its impact on individuals, children, the wider family and community. It will work to ensure that:

- Teaching and worship reflects awareness raising about domestic abuse, uses appropriate language and says clearly that domestic abuse is wrong
- The safety of individuals suffering abuse or seeking help is the first priority and to be aware of the need for confidentiality within the bounds of good safeguarding practice

Church of England Commitments on Domestic Abuse 2017

- Inappropriate behaviour is challenged, this needs to be done in an extremely careful way, in a way that does not place any individual including a victim at increased risk
- Clergy and clergy spouses have the same access to support and resources as others who are experiencing domestic abuse
- In addition the Diocesan Bishop will appoint a Bishop's Visitor whose role is to support the clergy or clergy spouse at the time of the breakdown of the relationship, and for as long as possible after, as required

Indicators of abuse

- Anxious – constantly checking phone, fearful if late, wanting to please all the time, conscious of time for everything
- Explaining away bruises, injuries, covering up, ‘walked into a door’, wearing sunglasses
- May never be alone, or allowed to be alone, may be isolated or increasingly isolated, few, if any friends
- May drop out at last minute, make excuses for not attending events
- Partner may talk over them, interrupt, demean and put down in public
- May have no access to money
- Unexplained absences from work

Indicators of abusive behaviour

- Treats partner as slave/servant
- Puts partner down, derogatory comments
- Minimises and reduces behaviour 'only a joke'
- Says they are the bread winner and partner no need to work
- Controls all the money
- Tires victim out – constantly changing demands to keep them happy
- Doesn't accept no as an answer
- Stalks victim, keeps check on everything
- Isolates victim – rude to family and friends so they stop coming round or maintaining contact

Definition of Sexual Violence

- any sexual act or attempt to obtain a sexual act by violence or coercion,
- unwanted sexual comments or advances,
- acts to traffic a person or acts directed against a person's sexuality,

regardless of the relationship to the victim

A Survivor's view

The abuse went on for six years before I realised that what I was experiencing wasn't just a bad marriage. Everyone says marriage is difficult so at first I thought it was that – our adjustment to married life.

There was pressure to make marriage work and to sacrifice yourself. After all the church says 'till death us do part'. I bent over backwards to make it work.

From the outside most people thought we were the perfect happy couple. But I was walking on eggshells in my own home, never knowing what mood he would be in when he came home.

It was such a lonely time. I didn't think anyone would believe me if I told them what home was like. I was desperate for some hope.

Why Don't You Just Leave?



Exercises

Gains and
Losses



Theology

It is important to acknowledge the role of theology and to listen when a person discloses domestic abuse. Consider that:

- A person may stay longer due to churches teaching on divorce and re-marriage
- The priority on relationships, family and marriage in church can make it difficult to disclose
- The priority on prayer and God changing things, can result in false hope of change

Spiritual Direction 6

You have now heard the story of this directee in a way she has not been able to tell it before and you recognise that there are signs here of possible domestic abuse.

What are your immediate concerns?

How do you respond in the moment?

Do's and Don'ts of working with survivors

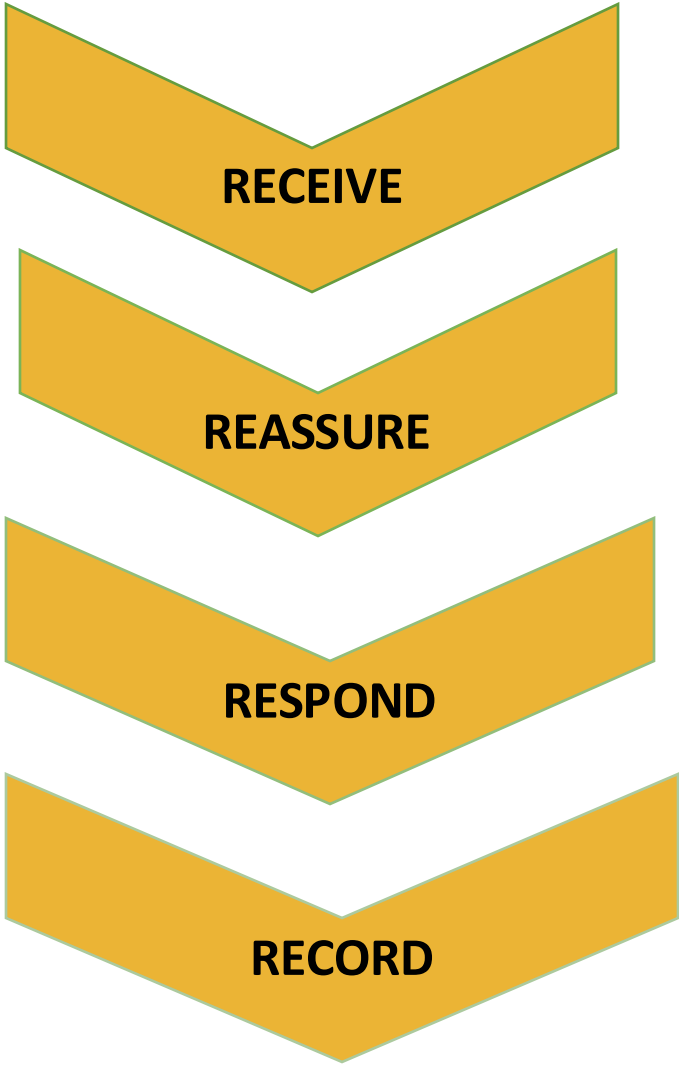
Do's

- Find a safe space to talk
- Listen, give time and reassurance
- Believe what they say
- Prioritise immediate safety
- Give info on support services

Don'ts

- Minimise the severity
- Go to partner to confirm story or obtain the other side of the story
- React with disbelief or disgust
- Expect them to make decisions quickly
- Don't encourage to forgive, pray and take back abusive partner

What can the We Do?



RECEIVE

- Recognise that abuse does happen in Christian relationships and in Churches too...
- Know the signs of power and control in a relationship
- Listen

REASSURE

- **I believe you** is a helpful first response
- Within **your limitations..**
- Let the other know you have heard...

RESPOND

- Refer to Helplines 0808 2000 247
- Refer to Professionals - go with the individual if you can

RECORD

- Any dates/times
- What the victim/survivor or others involved said
- Your actions and any concerns you may have

Responding to survivors

- Treat 'historic' non-current cases as if they were current
- Keep focused on the survivor's needs
- Listen – and offer an independent listener or agency
- Be honest and open about the process, and where you will need to share information
- Be aware you have a duty to assess any current risk

What can you do in response?



REFER:

Any person, who knows or suspects that a child or adult is being or has been harmed or is at risk of significant harm, has a **duty to refer** concern to the local Safeguarding Representative who in turn will notify Social Care and/or the Police.

It is not your role to investigate or assess whether or not abuse had occurred – inform the DSA.

In an emergency 999 / 101

Gather sufficient information as possible at the time

Always involve the DSA if:

- A. You receive information concerning a church officer ie**
- All who hold the Bishop's licence, permission or commission
 - All who hold parish positions of trust
 - All who work with children, young people and adults at risk of neglect and/or abuse
- B. You receive information about an officer or someone who presents a risk to a child or an adult.**

Spiritual Direction 7

Returning to our meeting with our directee....

As she comes to the end of her narrative, you are very aware that there are some red flags here with regard to possible abuse.

What are you specifically needing to pay attention to?

What is your immediate response now?

Spiritual Direction 8

You realise that you will have to refer this to the DSA.

- How does the thought of sharing information sit with your understanding of confidentiality?
- How do you set boundaries of confidentiality with a directee in the beginning of your relationship with them?

Confidentiality

You have a legal obligation to pass on confidential information when a child or vulnerable adult:

- is at risk of **SIGNIFICANT HARM** to themselves or others
- or if a **CRIME** has been or may have been committed

Spiritual Direction 9

Your directee has now left after making arrangements to meet again and having told her that you cannot keep this information to yourself and that it must be shared with safeguarding.

You now need to make a record of the encounter and the information you have received.

- **What must be included in that record?**

Recording – the 4 W's

Who

Was involved (key people)

What

- Happened (facts not opinion)

When

- Did it happen? (Date and time)

Whom

- Was it referred to

REMEMBER

- Sign and date, including the year

Recording pastoral encounters where safeguarding information is shared

A record should include, as relevant:

- Date, time and place
- Who else present
- Purpose
- Summary (factual, qualify if opinion)
- Potential or actual safeguarding issues
- Actions taken and decisions made, including advice taken and who shared with
- Any Emails, letters, phone calls, texts, meetings, interviews should be recorded as part of the safeguarding record

It should always be signed and dated.

Note keeping in spiritual direction

- Do you keep notes?
If so why? If not, why not?
- How do you use them?
- How do you keep them?
- How safe are your notes?
- How does this sit with confidentiality?

Keeping notes.....

- Do not use any means of identifying people including initials
- Identify directees only by a number
- Keep the reference number list in a separate locked place
- If in hard copy notes must be locked away
- If electronic copy, the files must be password protected.

Some reminders.....

- Every human being has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of male and female in God's own image and likeness.
- All people bear the image of God.
- It is the Christian duty of everyone to recognise and support those who are identified as being more vulnerable.
- We also need to ensure that we take care in the relationships that we build that these principles are maintained particularly if there is an imbalance in the power of relationships or where one person could be dependent upon another.

Finally.....

- If you are in any doubt about what you are hearing or how to handle something, pick up the phone and call the safeguarding advisor or deputy for advice or help. They are ***really*** friendly, and that is what they are there for.
- **Take care of yourself** in the process. Speak to your supervisor or the spirituality advisor for support.

Diocesan Safeguarding Officer

Assistant DSO