The abuse of a child or adult involves significant harm that will have an impact on them not just whilst it is happening but potentially for the rest of their lives. Any action that causes significant harm, whether intentional or unintentional, is abuse.

Someone up to the age of 18 is a child. Promoting a Safer Church 2017 defines a vulnerable adult as someone aged 18 or over whose ability to protect themselves is significantly impaired through physical or mental disability or illness, old age, emotional fragility or distress or otherwise, either temporarily or indefinitely. Both need special care and protection.

Anyone can perpetrate abuse – a child or adult of any gender, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, religion, ethnicity or culture.

Knowledge of and sensitivity to racial, cultural and religious patterns is crucial to good safeguarding practice – BUT none of these can ever be used to justify or condone the abuse of a person.

*The following categories of abuse*

*apply to both adults and children:*

Physical Abuse …

… is the causing of physical harm to a person and can include fabricating or inducing illness in a child, inappropriate restraint, the misuse of medicines or force-feeding or other inappropriate sanctions

Neglect …

… includes failure to meet a child’s basic physical or psychological needs or withholding adequate care of a vulnerable adult which means their basic needs are not met. A mother can neglect her unborn child through substance misuse and an adult can self-neglect

Emotional Abuse …

… includes making a person feel worthless, humiliated, ashamed or afraid to the extent that it affects their emotional health and development. It can include bullying or harassment, control or coercion, depriving a person of social contact with others, seeing/hearing the ill-treatment of another

Sexual Abuse …

… of a child includes both physical sexual abuse and non-physical sexual abuse – making, watching, distributing sexual images of a child, sexting, grooming for sexual abuse or encouraging sexually inappropriate behaviour. Child Sexual Exploitation can include organised gangs manipulating or coercing young people into sexual activity. Sexual abuse of an adult occurs when informed consent for sexual activity (including non-contact sexual activity such as indecent exposure) is not freely given - e.g. when a person is controlled or coerced or they lack cognitive capacity to give consent. Sexual activity with a child under 18 or a vulnerable adult for whom you have pastoral responsibility will always be sexual abuse

Domestic Abuse …

… includes any form of abuse, violent, sexual or controlling behaviours by over 16s who are, or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. Children can be directly or indirectly affected by domestic abuse in their household

Spiritual Abuse …

…. is not a formally recognised category of abuse but is of concern to faith communities. It includes using religious belief to justify abuse – such as using physical or emotional harm to ‘deliver’ a person from evil spirits or witchcraft - or for the control or coercion of a person.

Grooming ….

…. is using a power imbalance in a relationship to control or coerce a person into doing something they do not want to do or gaining a person’s total trust or ‘love’ so that they will do anything their abuser asks

*The following additional categories of abuse apply to adults*:

Financial Abuse …

… is misusing or refusing access to someone else’s money, property or possessions, or manipulating or extorting someone into handing over their money

Institutional Abuse …

… occurs when an organisation’s policies and practices are more important that the individual person’s needs and wishes so that good standards of care according to individual choice are not provided

Discriminatory Abuse …

… includes any form abuse that is based on a person’s race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, culture or ethnicity

The internet, social media, smart phones etc … can be used by adults and children to form relationships in order to abuse or to disclose abuse or to perpetrate abuse – such as distributing images or bullying

The trafficking … of adults and children can be for sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, ‘sweat-shop labour’ or any other form of exploitation

Signs of Abuse

There are many different signs of abuse some of which may indicate that something other than abuse is happening in the person’s life. We should always be concerned when a person’s:

* behaviour is out of character for them
* appearance or hygiene deteriorates
* behaviour is fearful
* trying to hide something
* physical injuries have no satisfactory explanation or occur repeatedly

It is reasonable to say ‘That bruise looks painful, how did it happen?’ or ‘You don’t seem yourself at the moment, are you okay?’ to explore concerns

*If you work with children or vulnerable adults you must understand and be able to recognise what abuse is and the signs to look for. For a more detailed guide to abuse see the Recognising Abuse factsheet on our website at* [*www.cofebirmingham.com/safeguarding*](http://www.cofebirmingham.com/safeguarding)*/*

*or complete the C0 Basic Safeguarding Awareness e-learning module at* [*https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/*](https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/)

Report

NEVER promise to keep a secret

**ALWAYS** report any concerns, however small they may seem, all disclosures and all allegations

**TELL** Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator or Vicar…



… or, when the concern is about them/you can’t get in touch with them/you don’t want to tell anyone at your church, tell the Bishop’s Safeguarding Adviser

If you need immediate advice and can’t wait to get in touch with any of the above call the duty social care team or NSPCC helpline

If a situation is not safe and someone is in danger or needs immediate help call the police

Contact Numbers:

Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator:

Vicar:

Bishop’s Safeguarding Adviser: 07324 993844

Children’s Social Services:

Adult Social Services:

31:8 (formerly CCPAS): 0303 003 11 11

Police: 101 or 999

NSPCC: 0808 800 5000

ChildLine: 0808 11 11

Elder Abuse: 0808 808 8141

Samaritans: 08457 909090

Domestic Violence: 0808 2000 247



A Brief Guide to the Categories of Abuse for Leaders & Helpers



