Respond Well

DO

* Prioritise the person’s safety above all else
* Keep calm, listen carefully to what the person is saying and give them time to talk, as often as they need
* Accept without judgement or comment and take seriously what the person is saying
* Reassure the person that the abuse is not their fault
* Ask what the person would like to happen next
* If safe, let the person know where they can find further help

DO NOT

* Show shock or disbelief or jump to conclusions or minimise the impact or severity of the abuse
* Push the person into giving details of the abuse – your role is to listen to what they want to tell you, NOT to investigate
* Expect the person to make decisions quickly
* Alert the alleged abuser – or anyone else who may alert them - or speak to them to hear their version
* Encourage the person to forgive or take back their abuser
* Be complicit in the abuse by minimising, reducing, justifying, denying or seeking to explain the behaviour of the alleged abuser
* Discuss what the person has told you with others who are not involved (friend/colleague/partner) – only talk to others with consent or in accordance with your church’s procedures

Record

* make a record of what the person has told you and pass it to your Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator – seek consent from the person - or record anonymously initially and seek advice on disclosing the person’s identity
* Keep the record factual – who, why, what, where, when, how – sign and date it
* Agree with the person that what you’ve written is accurate – unless this is unsafe or may cause more harm or unnecessary delay in getting help

Report

NEVER promise to keep a secret

– but always maintain confidentiality

**ALWAYS** report all concerns, however small they may seem, all disclosures and all allegations – any of these that involve a person who works or volunteers for the church MUST be reported. If under 18s are involved, or present in the household, the abuse MUST be reported.

**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’re worried but not sure if it is abuse or if you need consent to report - *ALWAYS* report to get advice, but initially withhold the person’s details

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



A Guide to Domestic Abuse for Leaders & Helpers





The Church of England believes:

* that **all forms** of abuse, including domestic abuse, are irreconcilable with the Christian faith
* that faith and scripture cannot be used to justify domestic abuse – nor any other form of abuse

The way we respond to domestic abuse is a reflection of our faith and beliefs as a Christian community – it is everyone’s responsibility to ensure that domestic abuse is not tolerated and appropriate action is taken against the abuser.

Domestic Abuse is…

… 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. It includes but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional, neglect and spiritual abuse.

Domestic abuse is the systematic abuse of power and control and is fundamentally linked to inequality. The majority of domestic abuse is perpetrated by men against women or against other men that they are in a relationship with. But women can abuse too - both men and other women they are in a relationship with. Children can abuse their parents (including elderly parents).

The abuse of power and control is the opposite of the love and freedom that Christ offers us

Controlling behaviour is behaviour that makes people sub-ordinate or dependent by isolating them from friends and family and other sources of support, taking control of their resources and depriving them of their independence.

Coercive behaviour includes acts of assault, threat, humiliation or intimidation that are used to harm, punish or frighten another person.

Coercive Control lies at the heart of domestic abuse and is the micromanagement of everyday life. It crushes the spirit even more fundamentally than the deprivation of basic necessities because it leaves little space for a person to breathe.

Sexual Abuse is any behaviour of a sexual nature which is unwanted and takes place without consent or understanding. ***Rape*** is when someone has penetrative sex with another person against their will or understanding. This includes vaginal, anal and oral penetration. ***Sexual assault*** covers any other sort of sexual contact and behaviour that is unwanted, ranging from touching to any other activity – including non-contact, e.g. indecent exposure - if it is sexual.

Violence and abuse is NEVER the victim’s ‘fault’ – there is no justifiable ‘reason’ or ‘excuse’

Signs

* Anxious – constantly checking phone, fearful if late, wanting to please all the time
* Explaining away bruises or injuries -‘walked into a door’, covering them up - wearing sunglasses
* May never be alone, or allowed to be alone, may be isolated or increasingly isolated, few, if any friends, hardly ever sees family
* May drop out at last minute, make excuses for not attending events
* Partner may talk over them, interrupt, demean or put down in public
* Threats, intimation, harassment, stalking by partner
* May have no access to money
* Unexplained absences from work
* Partner may seek to minimise, excuse or ‘justify’ their own behaviour towards the victim

A victim of domestic abuse is most at risk of being killed when they leave the abusive relationship

Children…

… can experience domestic abuse in many ways – through intervening to protect the parent/carer victim; being forced to join the parent/carer perpetrator; hearing or witnessing violent attacks or verbal abuse; coercive control by the parent/carer perpetrator can be extended over the whole family; the stress, anxiety or fearful behaviour of the parent/carer victim

Contact Numbers:

Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator:

Vicar:

Bishop’s Safeguarding Adviser: 07324 993844

Police: 101 or 999

B’ham & Solihull Women’s Aid: 0800 800 0028

West Mercia Women’s Aid: 0800 980 3331

Staffordshire Women’s Aid: 0870 2700 123

Black Country Women’s Aid: 0121 552 6448

Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247

Men’s Domestic Violence: 0808 801 0327

LGBT Domestic Violence: 0300 999 5428

Action on Elder Abuse: 0800 808 8141

Emergency Injunction Support: 0844 8044 999