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## SAFEGUARDING

### SAFEGUARDING FOR SMALL GROUP LEADERS

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#### Key information

Safeguarding is an important aspect of all ministry at St Nick's and is the responsibility of everyone, whether you are leading groups of adults, young people or children. As small group leaders, you may encounter vulnerable adults or issues of current or historical abuse raised by adult group members.

Appropriate response to issues of both current and historical abuse is vital, for the protection of the individual and for others who may be impacted.

We're conscious that abuse, whether recent or historical, is sensitive and pastorally challenging. If you have any personal concerns, please seek support by speaking to your SLOB leader.

Please refer to this document as necessary during the year. More information on supporting vulnerable adults can be found in the St Nick's Safeguarding Policy (electronic copies of these documents available at [www.stnickschurch.co.uk/safeguarding](http://www.stnickschurch.co.uk/safeguarding) or via [mikey@snc.a.co.uk](mailto:mikey@snc.a.co.uk)).

Thank you for helping us to serve the church family in this way.

# What is abuse and what is historical abuse?

## Abuse

The Department of Health states that “somebody may abuse or neglect an individual by inflicting harm, or failing to prevent harm. Individuals may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger”. Abuse can be described under one of (or a combination of) these categories:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological/emotional abuse
- Spiritual abuse
- Financial and material abuse
- Domestic Abuse
- Discriminatory abuse
- Neglect and acts of omission
- Self neglect

More information on areas of abuse and how to recognise signs of abuse can be found in the vulnerable adults section of the St Nick’s Safeguarding Policy.

## Historical Abuse

Historical abuse is any allegation or disclosure of abuse committed in the past against a child or young person who is now an adult.

***If anyone reports any of the above abuse to you, whether recent or historical, and whether they were the abused or the abuser, you must follow the action points on the next page.***

## Remember

1. Historical abuse must be treated as seriously as recent abuse.
2. Children and young people means anyone under 18.
3. Illegal activity includes sex with someone under age 16, child pornography and sharing explicit images of children.
4. The church is required to take advice from the Diocese and may need to report allegations or disclosures of criminal acts to the Police.

# When someone tells you they have been abused, or have committed abuse, whether recently or many years ago...

## General points:

- (1) Above all else, listen
- (2) Keep calm, and show understanding/acceptance of what is said, however unlikely it seems. Reassure the individual that they were right to tell you
- (3) Never push for information. Avoid leading questions and ask only what is necessary to ensure a clear understanding of what has been said
- (4) Let the individual know what you are going to do next and that you will keep them informed. Let them know that you will need to tell someone else - **don't promise confidentiality**
- (5) However, do reassure them that you will only tell who you need to, and that they will remain involved in decisions going forward

## Action you must then take:

- (1) You must contact the Ministry Leader, Chris Fishlock, and tell him what you know (you do not need to disclose any names at this stage unless told otherwise). If the allegation is against the Ministry Leader, contact the Church Safeguarding Officer (CSO), Frank Owusu-Sekyere (contact details can be found below).
- (2) You retain the right to report serious matters directly to Social Services or the police. Even so, as soon as possible (and within 24 hours), you must also contact either the Ministry Leader or the CSO.
- (3) Apart from telling the Ministry Leader or CSO, the information must be treated as confidential and not shared with co-leaders, SLOB leaders or other church members.
- (4) Under no circumstances should you investigate concerns of abuse yourself. Your role is to pass on the information you have received.
- (5) Make notes as soon as possible (preferably within one hour, but always within 24 hours),
  - writing down exactly what was said and when,
  - what you said in reply and what was happening immediately beforehand (e.g. a description of the activity/situation),
  - record dates and times of these events and when you made the record.
  - Keep all hand-written notes, even if subsequently typed. A copy of these notes must be passed onto the Ministry Leader/ CSO.
- (6) Consider your own feelings and ask the Ministry Leader for pastoral support if needed and consider with the Ministry Leader what pastoral support is needed for the individual involved.

**If you have any concerns or need to talk to anyone, please first contact the Minister (and Ministry Leader), Chris Fishlock: 07782 315549, [chris@snca.co.uk](mailto:chris@snca.co.uk)**

Otherwise contact the Church Safeguarding Officer, Frank Owusu-Sekyere: 07939 327115, [safeguarding@snca.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@snca.co.uk)

## Can some adults be considered 'vulnerable'?

Yes. The term 'vulnerable adult' refers to 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, illness, old age, emotional fragility, distress, etc.

Please note that adults may be vulnerable temporarily due to recent life situations, besides those who are vulnerable for the long-term or indefinitely.

These individuals may not consider themselves vulnerable, but they may nonetheless be vulnerable to being abused by individuals in positions of leadership and responsibility.

As adults are not inherently vulnerable and in need of protection it is important to recognise that the factors described below do not, of themselves, mean that a person is vulnerable. It is a combination of these factors and the circumstances that a person finds him/herself in that can make an individual vulnerable to abuse or neglect.

### Some factors that increase vulnerability include:

- A physical or sensory disability or impairment.
- A physical illness (including temporary).
- A mental illness, chronic or acute.
- Mental health issues (inc. temporary)
- A learning disability.
- An addiction to alcohol or drugs.
- Dementia, or failing faculties of old age.
- Refugee families or individuals (including those seeking asylum).
- Victims/survivors of domestic abuse – direct violence and/or significant emotional coercion.
- Those who have suffered historic abuse in childhood.
- A permanent or temporary reduction in physical, mental or emotional capacity brought about by life events – e.g. bereavement or abuse or trauma.
- Those who are homeless.

As a Small Group Leader you are well-placed to notice factors that may indicate that a person may be vulnerable, and/or being abused or neglected. Therefore, you should be vigilant in identifying concerns and understanding how to respond appropriately, including:

- Understanding what a vulnerable adult is
- Knowing the factors that are likely to increase vulnerability
- Knowing about different types of abuse and neglect and their signs (see Vulnerable Adults Policy)
- Supporting adults to help them keep safe
- Knowing who to tell about suspected abuse or neglect
- Supporting adults to think and weigh up the risks and benefits of different opinions when exercising choice and control

### Action points:

- (1) Please be mindful of the safeguards in place if visiting a vulnerable adult or communicating with them electronically (see Vulnerable Adults Policy)
- (2) If you suspect that a person is a vulnerable adult please contact the Ministry Leader (Chris Fishlock), or the Vulnerable Adults Champion (Mikey Williams), and tell them what you know. This may help us to safeguard the individual better.

## **Additional Points**

- If you have experienced abuse yourself, the issues raised by this document may be particularly sensitive. If you would like pastoral support, please approach your SLOB leader. We recognise this may be a very difficult thing to do, especially if you have not told anyone before, but we are eager to provide appropriate pastoral support.
- If you have committed abuse or any related form of criminal act in the past, we would encourage you to be open about it with the Minister, however difficult that may be.
- A disclosure of recent or historical abuse might have been made to you in a context outside of St. Nick's, for example on a summer camp. If you did not report the matter at the time, we encourage you to do so now, however much time has passed. If you are in doubt, please raise the matter with the Minister.
- If for any reason you feel unable to approach the Minister, please approach your SLOB leader in the first instance and seek advice. In the interests of maintaining appropriate confidentiality, we could encourage you to do this as a last resort and without (at least in the first instance) disclosing the names of those to whom your concern relates.
- In unlikely circumstances, the senior leadership team reserves the right to ask you to step down from leading a small group (and potentially other areas of responsibility) indefinitely, or for a period of time, if
  - i) an allegation of misconduct is made about you,
  - ii) it is deemed by the senior leadership team that your conduct has been or is becoming inappropriate, potentially harmful, or out of step with the Bible, or
  - iii) it is deemed by the senior leadership team that you are not currently able to fulfil your duties as expected for whatever reason.Agreeing to this document means you are agreeing to comply with any such decisions (and, if necessary, accompanying investigations).  
In any such situation, be assured that we will take your views into consideration and seek to support you appropriately where possible.

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