

POLICY



General statements of principle and intent

P1. Principles of the House of Bishops' policy¹

Christian communities should be places where all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse. The Church is particularly called by God to support those at the margins, those less powerful and those without a voice in our society. The Church can work towards creating a safe and non-discriminatory environment by being aware of some of the particular situations that create vulnerability. Issues which need to be considered include both the physical environment and the attitudes of workers. A person who might be considered vulnerable has the right to:

- Be treated with respect and dignity;
- Have their privacy respected;
- Be able to lead as independent a life as possible;
- Be able to choose how to lead their life;
- Have the protection of the law;
- Have their rights upheld regardless of their ethnicity, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religion or cultural background;
- Be able to use their chosen language or method of communication;
- Be heard.

P2. Policy Statement²

The Church of England is committed to encouraging an environment where all people and especially those who may be vulnerable for any reason are able to worship and pursue their faith journey with encouragement and in safety. Everyone, whether they see themselves as vulnerable or not, will receive respectful pastoral ministry recognizing any power imbalance within such a relationship.

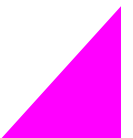
All church workers involved in any pastoral ministry will be recruited with care including the use of the Criminal Records Bureau disclosure service when legal or appropriate. Workers will receive training and continuing support.

Any allegations of mistreatment, abuse, harassment or bullying will be responded to without delay. Whether or not the matter involves the church there will be cooperation with the police and local authority in any investigation.

Sensitive and informed pastoral care will be offered to anyone who has suffered abuse, including support to make a complaint if so desired: help to find appropriate specialist care either from the church or secular agencies will be offered.

¹ Section 2.1 Promoting a Safe Church 2006

² Section 2.2 Promoting a Safe Church 2006



Congregations will often include people who have offended in a way that means they are a continuing risk to vulnerable people. The risks will be managed sensitively with the protection of adults and children in mind.

P3. Our theological approach ³

From beginning (in the cry of a baby) to end (in the cry from the cross), the life and death of Jesus Christ illustrates the willingness of God to be vulnerable in order to share to the full our world of pain, poverty, suffering and death. In his earthly ministry, Jesus constantly showed himself to be compassionately on the side of the outcast, the marginalized and the stranger, reaching across social barriers with the inclusive love of God. This was wholly in line with the Hebrew Bible's priority concern for orphans and widows, its obligation to provide a voice for the voiceless, and its prophetic call for justice to 'roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream' (Amos 5.24). The risen Christ's commission to his followers ('As the Father has sent me, so I send you' [John 20.21]) requires the Christian Church to exercise that same concern for those whom some in society treat as the outsider and the stranger, to reach across barriers of exclusion and demonstrate a love which shows itself in compassionate pastoral care and in the quest for justice in all our relationships. The heart of Christian pastoral care is this: love for God and love for our neighbour, the social expression of which is justice in all human affairs. In line with the gospel of creation and redemption, Christian pastoral care has often been described in terms of healing, sustaining and reconciling.

All people, and especially those who may be marginalized through vulnerability, need to receive the healing love of God to rebuild relationships with others or within themselves which illness, disability or abuse may have fractured. Healing is a process of being made more whole.

There can be substantial steps for some people in this life, which can be aided through the Church's ministry of healing and reconciliation, though full healing in all dimensions of life must wait for the coming of Christ's kingdom when all creation will be healed and renewed. For those who have been abused, neighbour love includes the need for them to be listened to and believed, supported as they cope with the effects of trauma, abled to make the choices which will lead to healing and start on the costly road towards forgiveness.

The Christian gospel offers the grace of reconciliation with God, which can enable people to learn to live lives more reconciled with others and with their environment. Everyone needs the sustaining reassurance that they are treated with the respect that is due to all human beings made in the image of God and precious to God.

³ Section 1.4, Promoting a Safe Church 2006



Those who have challenging personal situations must receive the resources they need to live independent lives with dignity. Everyone needs to know that they can live safely in a non-threatening environment. Christian pastoral care takes place in the context of the present world, which in gospel terms is provisional. We live in the time between God's living Word to us in Jesus Christ, and the coming of God's kingdom in its fullness, when there will be no more pain, no more tears, no more social exclusion, and no more death.

In this world the Holy Spirit sustains our ministry – enabling us to do what we can within the constraints of fallenness and sin, and yet holding out the living hope that the day will come when God will be all and in all.

