



# Protecting All God's Children

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# Definitions as per 2010 Policy

- *“Child” – both children and young people under the age of 18*
- *“Child protection” – responding to concerns when it appears a child may have been harmed.*
- *“Children in need” –*
  - *a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him or her of services by the local authority*
  - *Health or development is impaired*
  - *He or she is disabled*
- *“Harm” versus “Significant Harm”*
  - *Ill treatment versus the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention*

# Theological approach

*“A Christian approach to safeguarding children will therefore expect both individuals and communities to:*

- Create a safe environment for children and their families*
- Act promptly on any complaints made*
- Care for those who have been abused in the past*
- Minister appropriately to those who have been abused*
- Provide opportunities for healing and flourishing”*

# What is “abuse” for the Church of England?

“Children are harmed in many ways. Where their health, physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual or social development is damaged by other people, this is an abuse of relationships, a misuse of power and a betrayal of trust. Someone may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm.”

# The Church of England: Statutory Definitions

The Church of England complies to the UK Government policy (“Working Together to Safeguard Children”, 2010) on the following four categories of abuse;

1. Physical Abuse
2. Sexual Abuse
3. Neglect
4. Emotional Abuse

# Some facts about child abuse

- Broadly defined, it is “an abuse of power”
- Although not new, it is increasingly recognized
- Most is perpetrated by an adult well known to the child (& well trusted)
- Children can also perpetrate abuse against other children
- Children exposed to domestic violence are considered “emotionally abused”
- Failure to act, according to the church, means that a “knowing adult” is also guilty of abuse

# Physical Abuse

“Physical abuse involves hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical injury to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or a carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.”

# Signs of Physical Abuse

The symptoms of physical abuse manifest themselves as bruising on areas of the body where it would be difficult to have occurred accidentally, fractured limbs, etc. Children can also be withdrawn, fearful, and aggressive.

# Neglect

“Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/ or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development.”

Neglect may occur during pregnancy, as a result of maternal substance abuse.

Once a child is born, it may result in failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter. Abandonment, failure to protect from abuse, failure to ensure adequate supervision or provide medical care also qualify as neglect.

# Signs of Neglectful Abuse

“Neglect is usually obvious. The child will be inappropriately dressed for the weather conditions, dirty, unkempt, poor personal hygiene, low weight and height for age, poor skin, and hair condition, constant hunger, voracious appetite, hiding food, etc.”

In addition (from Dr. J);

- A child may look listless, apathetic or unresponsive with no apparent medical cause.
- A child may be observed thriving when away from the home environment.

# Emotional Abuse

“Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the need of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or “making fun” of the way in which they communicate.

It may involve serious bullying causing children to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation, or corruption of children. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed upon children.”

# Signs of Emotional Abuse

“It is very difficult to recognize physical signs of emotional abuse, but it may manifest itself by the child lacking in self confidence, as a result of constant criticism, poor interaction between parent and child, developmental delay, communication difficulties, self hatred, etc.”

Dr. J; Some say the following may be signs of emotional abuse;

- Low self-esteem
- Apathy
- Being fearful and withdrawn or displaying “frozen watchfulness”
- Unduly aggressive behavior
- Excessive clinging or attention seeking behavior
- Constantly seeking to please
- Over-readiness to relate to anyone, even strangers

# Sexual Abuse

“This category involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. These may involve physical contact, include assault by penetration or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.”

# Signs of Sexual Abuse

*“It is almost impossible to recognize symptoms of sexual abuse which will result in abnormal medical conditions. It requires highly specialized medical professionals...”*

*“Notwithstanding medical symptoms, the child may present as being withdrawn, fearful of adults, show inappropriate sexual knowledge for their age, extreme exposure or preoccupation with genitalia, unexplained sums of money, or gifts.”*

# Continued Dr. J's input...

## *Physical Signs*

- Recurrent abdominal pain
- Unexplained pregnancy
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Fecal soiling or retention
- Recurrent urinary tract infections
- Genital pain
- Irritation or bleeding
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Bed wetting

## *Behavioral Signs*

- Sexual knowledge unusual for the age of the child
- Sexually provocative relationships with adults
- Sexualized play with other children
- Hints of sexual activity through play, drawing or conversation
- Requests for contraception advice
- Promiscuity or prostitution

# “Special Topics” which we won’t discuss, but the church does...

- Internet related abuse
- Bullying
- Children affected by gangs
- Fabricated or induced illnesses
- Abuse on disabled children
- Deliberate self harm
- Domestic violence
- Parents who themselves are vulnerable
- Allegations of possession by evil spirits
- Female genital mutilation
- Child trafficking
- Sexual exploitation
- Forced marriage and honor based violence
- Complex (organized or multiple) abuse
- Spiritual abuse within a faith community

# Who are the abusers?

- 80-90 % are known to the family
- Men perpetrate most cases of sexual abuse.
- Common factors include:
  - substance abuse
  - lack of parenting skills
  - work or relationship stress
  - poor understanding of a child's normal developmental path
  - history of violence or abuse in the family.

# What children are at higher risk?

- *Girls are three times more likely to be abused.*
- *Children under the age of 12*
- *Children with lower self esteem*
- *Children with disabilities*
- *Children whose parents believe “that will never happen to my child” and do not, therefore, take the time to educate them.*

# Specific children targeted by abusers

- Children under the age of 12
- Girls (3x more likely than boys)
- Children that are known to them
- Children that they can create confidence with
- Children lacking in self esteem
- Children who are easily intimidated
- Children of all races, cultures, and economic status are at risk
- Children in the wrong place at the wrong time.
- Abusers generally “shop” for their victims...

# Immediate Action

- Any concerns about a child should be immediately reported to the church Safeguarding Officer, who is currently Claire.
- DO NOT DELAY in contacting the Safeguarding Officer.
- If you cannot contact the Safeguarding Officer, contact Reverend Andrew directly.

# Investigation of Suspected Abuse

- “It is essential to remember that it is NOT the responsibility of anyone in the parish/ church/ chaplaincy to carry out investigations of offences against members or vulnerable groups, which can be sensitive, complex, and require a great deal of expertise and experience.”

# Hearing a child abuse disclosure

- Listen
  - Be calm (breath deep)
  - let the child lead the conversation
- Reassure
  - It is not their fault
  - They were right to tell you & brave to tell you
  - That you are going to help them
- Write it down!

# Do's and Don'ts

## DO;

- Listen without interrupting
- Reassure them they are not to blame
- Stay calm
- Be honest and tell the child what will happen next

## DO NOT

- make promises to the child (i.e. that you will keep it a secret)
- Interrogate the child (leave that to the specialist)
- Ask leading questions (“Was it your dad that caused that bruise?”)

# Written Record

- Write down exact words and phrases used by the child as soon as possible.

DR J says...

- Your adrenaline will be surging in such instances, writing down what happened immediately is critical. You simply will not remember it with the same clarity, even within an hour of the event when you have “calmed down”. Your mind might make slight alterations to the story, which can make big differences.

# Why do people feel reluctant to report abuse?

- “What if I’m wrong?”
- Impact on the family
- Impact on the church

*REMEMBER: Children rarely lie about abuse.*

*CONSIDER: The trauma a child faces; they will have had to overcome a lot to disclose.*

# What helps the prognosis of a child who has been abused?

- Interpretation of the abuse
- Whether they disclosed - how quickly
- Family support
- Extra-familial support
- High self-esteem
- Attending therapy, workshops, doing reading
- Passage of time
- Strongest predictors: level of maternal and family functioning

# Thank You!



*“Every person has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of male and female in God’s own image and likeness. Christians see this potential as fulfilled by God’s re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm”*



Principles of the House of Bishops’ Policy for Safeguarding Children (2010, Protecting All God’s Children: The Policy for Safeguarding Children in the Church of England)

