



Domestic Abuse Policy

The Church of King Charles the Martyr Potters Bar

Created on: 12 April 2018

Reviewed by the PCC: 9 July 2019, 17 June 2020, 27 July 2021, 20 July 2022, 12 July 2023

Reviewed by the PCC: Wednesday 2 July 2025

Date of next review: **July 2026**

Signed: *P W Townsend*

Phil Townsend (Churchwarden) on behalf of the PCC

August 2025

STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Church of King Charles the Martyr is committed to raising awareness about domestic abuse and its impact on individuals, children, the wider family and community.

1.1. The Church Community will work to ensure that:

- the safety of individuals suffering abuse or seeking help is the first priority;
- all are aware of the need for confidentiality within the bounds of good safeguarding practice;
- teaching and worship reflects awareness-raising about domestic abuse; uses appropriate language and says clearly that domestic abuse is wrong;
- inappropriate behaviour is challenged, this needs to be done in an extremely careful way, in a way that does not place any individual including a victim at increased risk.
- Clergy and clergy spouses have the same access to support and resources as others who are experiencing domestic abuse.

2.1 Guidance – What we will pledge to do

- Display the Policy for all to see at the back of the church and online.
- Appoint a named individual who is the point of contact for advice and support.
- Respond with rigour to any concerns about Domestic Abuse.
- Support those in leadership positions, in pastoral roles and safeguarding roles to engage in Diocesan domestic abuse training.
- Ensure that domestic abuse is discussed in marriage preparation.
- Challenge inappropriate comments and behaviours by the church community.
- Offer awareness raising.

3.1 How we will respond as a Church Community

THE INITIAL DISCLOSURE

If a victim discloses abuse, the following factors are important:

- Most victims/survivors want to be asked. If you are able to broach the subject, your offer of help could be the first step in enabling them to seek help; e.g. 'How are things at home?' and if it becomes appropriate, 'Is anyone hurting you?'
- Do try wherever possible to talk in a safe, private place where you will not be interrupted, or arrange to talk again (but someone in distress may start talking anywhere).
- Do try to make it clear that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Whilst you might respect an individual's right to confidentiality this cannot be guaranteed i.e. when someone is being hurt and a criminal offence has been committed, someone is in danger, or when children are involved.
- Do take plenty of time to listen and believe what they say. If they sense disbelief they may be discouraged from speaking again.

WHEN TO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION

- Do dial 999 (112 in Europe) if you are witnessing a violent incident or if the person needs medical care.
- If the victim is in immediate danger, the Police should be called. Be aware that intervention may heighten risk, but it is important to explore how to ensure people are safe.
- The safety of children is paramount. If children are involved, a referral to children's services needs to be made in addition to calling the Police. If possible, encourage the victim to make the referral themselves, perhaps supporting them through the process. The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA) will also need to be informed.

HOW TO RESPOND

- Do be sensitive to people's backgrounds and cultures and check your own and their understanding of how the cultural issues affect them. Ask them about what support is available to them from friends and family.
- Do affirm the strength and courage it takes to have survived the abuse and even more to talk about it.
- Do encourage them to seek professional help from a local domestic abuse service who will be able to offer practical safety planning advice, even if they do not want to leave their home.
- In addition give information about national specialist helplines and websites, as required.

- Do express concern for their safety and immediate welfare. Do they have somewhere to stay?
- Do ask about the children and their safety and welfare. You may need to persuade them to report any concerns to children's social care. You have no option but to do so if you have received information that a child is at risk.
- Do encourage them to focus on their own needs, something they may not have been able to do since the abuse began but which is critical in helping them to change their situation.
- Do reassure them that, whatever the circumstances, abuse is not justified and not their fault.
- Do ask them what they want from you and the parish. Offer help which is in response to their needs and preferences and which lets them keep in control.

WHAT RECORD KEEPING IS APPROPRIATE AND HOW TO FOLLOW THIS UP

- Do check if it is all right to contact them at home before doing so. Ask them what their preferred means of contact is and confirm that this is safe.
- Do keep information confidential and only share with informed consent where appropriate and if possible. (Keep up to date with new data regulations ICO May 2018)
- Respect the wishes of those who do not give consent to share confidential information. You should note that it may still be possible to share confidential information without consent if, in your judgement, it is necessary and proportionate to do so (i.e. there is a good reason), such as where the safety of the victim or (an) other(s) may be at risk. Always keep a record of your decision and the reasons why you decided to share (or not). If in doubt contact the DSA and the Diocesan Registrar.
- Do make a brief objective note of date, facts and context of what you have been told but keep your opinions separate. This should be kept in strict confidence but could be useful in any future prosecution (see Safeguarding Records: Joint Practice Guidance for the Church of England and the Methodist Church (2015)).
- You must share the incident with someone who is qualified within 24 hours and can support you to help you to think through the issues and action. This may be the DSA or local safeguarding officer/lead.
- Do seek advice from the DSA or local safeguarding officer/lead to review the safety and risk issues in relation to the alleged perpetrator if they are in the same Church. There may need to be a risk assessment and 'safeguarding agreement' put in place in line with House of Bishops practice guidance 9. This work needs to be undertaken in consultation with the DSA.
- Victim safety planning should be conducted by a professional, ideally from a domestic abuse service or a statutory agency. There may be an occasion when a victim wishes to discuss their safety with you. It is essential that you seek advice from a DSA before entering into detailed safety planning discussions.

- This planning would normally be guided by a safety planning format (see Appendix 6) and careful consideration should be given to where and how such information is provided and kept by the victim, to avoid being accessed by the perpetrator.
- If the alleged perpetrator is a church officer you must talk to the DSA and follow the House of Bishops practice guidance on responding to serious safeguarding concerns in related to Church Officers.

DO NOT

- Do not give information about the victim's whereabouts to the perpetrator or to others who might pass information on to the perpetrator.
- Do not discuss with the parish council/other members of a congregation who might inadvertently pass information on to the perpetrator.
- When victims are leaving a controlling perpetrator, they often have to leave with nothing and have access to very limited financial support. Consider how your church can provide practical support to survivors.

These are some actions to avoid in responding to alleged or known alleged or known perpetrators:

- Do not collude with, excuse or minimise their behaviour.
- Do not meet with them alone and in private. Meet in a public place or in the church with several other people around.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Key telephone numbers for sources of help

- National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247
- Legal support (National Centre for Domestic Violence): 0844 8044 999 – provides a free, fast, emergency injunction service for victims of domestic abuse.
- Male victims (Respect): 0808 801 0327
- Galop Helpline for domestic abuse in same sex relationships: 0800 999 5428
- KCM Safeguarding Policy
- www.stalbans.anglican.org/safeguarding/best-practice-guidelines

KEY PEOPLE TO CONTACT AT KCM

Helen Schmitz Safeguarding officer (contact via church office) – 01707 665579
safeguarding@kcm-church.org.uk

Gary Dakin (contact via church office) – 01707 665579