



## **Vineyard Bath Vulnerable Adult Policy**

This policy details our systems regarding vulnerable adults at Vineyard Bath. It explains what is appropriate behaviour towards the vulnerable adults at Vineyard Bath and how best to safeguard them. This policy details who to go to if there was an area of concern, and what training is given to staff and volunteers.

### **1. Introduction**

Vineyard Bath is committed to a practice which safeguards and promotes the welfare of vulnerable adults. Staff and volunteers in this organisation accept and recognise the church's responsibilities to develop awareness of issues which cause vulnerable adults harm. The church recognises that everyone has strengths and weaknesses, capacities and restrictions yet at some times may become vulnerable due to pressures, dangers, addictions, homelessness and overwhelming circumstances. Some people by reason of their physical or social circumstances have higher levels of vulnerability than others. This may be because, for example, they have a disability, mental health issues or dementia. It is the Christian duty of everyone to recognise and support those who are identified as being more vulnerable. In supporting a vulnerable adult we must do so with compassion and in a way that maintains dignity.

The church will safeguard vulnerable adults by:

- Sharing information about good safeguarding practice with its staff and volunteers. (Through biannual safeguarding training for all team members and through weekly best practice when meeting in person)

- Digital training in safeguarding vulnerable adults for all new CC leaders.
- Sharing information about concerns with relevant agencies, and involving families or carers appropriately.
- Carefully following procedures for safer recruitment in the selection of staff and volunteers (see our Safer Recruitment Policy)
- Providing effective management oversight for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training (eg. regular team meetings, 1:1 supervision with Nest leaders, Core Community termly training for leaders and Pastoral Care Team monthly meetings)

Vineyard Bath will review the Vulnerable Adult Policy on an annual basis. The safeguarding of children and adults is an integral part of the life and ministry of the church, is required by government legislation and is every individual's responsibility. This policy sits together with Vineyard Bath's Child Protection Policy.

When is an adult vulnerable?

Government guidance describes a vulnerable adult as, any person over the age of 18 years <sup>1</sup> "who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm". Within faith settings it is also recognised as a person who has recently suffered personal adversity making them in particular need of pastoral support. Some of the factors that increase vulnerability include:

- sensory or physical disability or impairment
- learning disability
- physical illness
- chronic or acute mental ill health (including dementia)
- addiction to alcohol or drugs

<sup>1</sup> No Secrets (Department of Health 2000)

- failing faculties in old age and
- permanent or temporary reduction in physical, mental or emotional capacity through life events such as bereavement / loss, abuse or trauma
- Breakdown of family structure and housing.

Mistreatment or abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm or exploitation.

Why Should the Church be concerned?

Every church has members who are or will become temporarily or permanently vulnerable and who look to the Church for support and care during these times. They entrust themselves to the care of their Christian community in good faith. At times they may not have the capacity to make decisions that may have consequences for themselves and / or for others. These may relate to daily care, health, finance or property. The Church has a duty to empower and protect such individuals and is supported by legislation to do so. <sup>2</sup>

All church activities which support an individual deemed vulnerable / at risk must follow these five principles as outlined in the 'Mental Capacity Act', 2005:

1. An assumption of capacity – all adults, even those felt to be lacking in mental capacity, have the right to make their own decisions and must be assumed to have the capacity to make decisions about their own safety unless it is established (on a balance of probabilities) otherwise;
2. Individuals should be supported in making their own decisions – giving all appropriate help and support before considering making any decisions on their behalf;
3. Respect the right to make unwise decisions – recognise that the person retains the right to make seemingly eccentric or unwise decisions;
4. Act in their best interests – decisions made on behalf of a person who lacks mental capacity must be in their best interest and the least restrictive on their basic rights and freedoms;
5. Take the least restrictive option – when making a decision or acting on behalf of a person who lacks capacity, consideration needs to be given to whether it's possible to act in a way that would interfere less with the person's rights and freedoms of action.

How do I know it is mistreatment or significant harm?

Abuse or mistreatment is a single or repeated act which violates an individual's human and / or civil rights. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, be an act of neglect or omission, or it may occur when a vulnerable adult is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which they have not given, or cannot give, consent . <sup>3</sup>

The harm can be deemed significant where there is not only ill treatment but impairment and avoidable deterioration to physical, mental, social, sexual or emotional health. The seriousness or extent of abuse is often not clear and concerns should be assessed carefully taking the vulnerable adult's demeanor and point of view into consideration. Each situation should consider the:

<sup>2</sup>The Mental Capacity Act 2005 - the act also introduced a new criminal offence of ill treatment or neglect of a person who lacks capacity <sup>3</sup>No Secrets (Department of Health) 2000

- vulnerability of the individual
- nature and extent of the abuse
- length of time it has been occurring
- impact on the individual
- risk of repeated or increasingly serious acts involving this or other vulnerable adults

General indications that abuse may be occurring

It may not always be obvious that a vulnerable adult is being subjected to mistreatment or abuse; and it may not be appropriate to question them at the time. However there may be general indicators that something is amiss and that the adult is unhappy about their situation. Marked change in their behaviour or disclosure of concerns should always be discussed immediately with the Designated Safeguarding Officer(s).

Some general indicators that may be noticed about the vulnerable adult:

- covering up or rationalising injuries or demeaning behaviours towards them
- confusion and / or denial that anything is amiss despite marked deterioration
- flirtatious, precocious or expressive sexual behaviour out of character
- indications of unusual confinement e.g. closed off in a room

Behaviours that may be observed about the carer, family member or the person close to the vulnerable adult include:

- getting the vulnerable adult to pay for their (i.e. carer's) shopping / petrol / tickets
- taking advantage of their naivety or trust
- attitudes of indifference or anger towards the vulnerable adult
- blaming or chastising them e.g. that soiling themselves was deliberate
- aggressive or harsh behaviour (threats, insults, harassment)
- inappropriate display of affection or care
- social isolation or restriction of activity
- obvious absence of assistance or attendance

Safeguarding Adult Boards (SABs)

With the introduction of the Care Act, 2014, each Local Authority now has a statutory duty to put in place a Safeguarding Adults Board. SABs will operate in a similar way to

Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs), and will be responsible for undertaking reviews where there is a suspicion that serious abuse or neglect has contributed to the serious harm or death of an individual (serious case reviews). They also have the power to carry out other reviews as they deem required and will liaise with the police and other statutory and voluntary organisations to arrange relevant meetings for information sharing. There is now a legal duty to provide this information and, in the explanatory notes to this Act, it is clear that this could include anyone coming into contact with a named vulnerable adult through their voluntary role or a minister of a church attended by either the vulnerable adult or their family.

## **2. Statement of Intent**

It is the policy of Vineyard Bath to safeguard the welfare of all vulnerable adults by protecting them from all forms of abuse or endangerment. This organisation is committed to creating a safe environment in which vulnerable adults can feel comfortable and secure while engaged in any of Vineyard Bath's sessions or events.

## **3. Types of abuse**

Nine categories of abuse have been identified. Any or all of these may be carried out as the result of: deliberate intent and targeting of vulnerable adults, negligence or ignorance.

Physical abuse:

Physical abuse is the act of physical ill treatment. It may include hitting, slapping, pushing, punching, kicking, burning, biting, suffocating, and misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.

Possible indicators of abuse:

- any injury not fully explained
- untreated or poorly treated injuries
- unexplained bruises or welts, particularly in protected areas
- bruises in various stages of healing, clusters forming regular patterns
- any cuts or abrasions
- injuries to head/face/scalp
- broken eyeglasses or frames
- unexplained burns, fractures or lacerations
- malnutrition and dehydration without an illness-related cause; loss of weight

- lack of personal care
- urinary/faecal incontinence
- inappropriate use of medication, overdosing or under dosing
- history of moving GPs or frequently moving between agencies (agency hopping)

The key to identifying mistreatment or abuse is noticing unexplained marks, or injuries with unsatisfactory explanations. Where an injury occurs often, you should at least question the safety of the environment and what could be done to minimise further risks. Always note the site and type of injury observed so that patterns can be identified. If however the injury (or injuries) still give(s) cause for concern discuss the issue with the Designated Safeguarding Officer(s) (within 24 hours) to decide if a further intervention is required.

#### Emotional or psychological abuse

Emotional or psychological abuse is the use of threats or fear of the use of 'power over' relationships to deny the vulnerable person's independent wishes. This includes: threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation and denial of dignity, blaming, controlling, bullying, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal of services / supportive networks.

Harassment may include: name calling, victimization and ostracism, unwanted sexual attention, stalking, compromising invitations or gifts, the display of images that are racially/sexually offensive or the suggestion that sexual favours might be advantageous.

Possible behaviour of vulnerable adult:

- insomnia/sleep deprivation
- change in appetite, weight gain or loss
- ambivalence to carer
- anger without an apparent cause
- deference, resignation, helplessness, excessive fears
- unexplained paranoia
- self-harming/suicide attempts
- emotional withdrawal – the person becomes uncommunicative or nonresponsive
- low self esteem

Possible behaviour by abuser:

- threats, intimidation, bullying
- threats of abandonment
- promises which are not kept

- punitive approach to incontinence etc. blaming, sanctions
- few visitors or other contact
- locking the person in

Visible signs may not be evident, however the impact of emotional mistreatment or abuse should never be underestimated as the deterioration in a victim's physical or mental health may take a long time to recover from, and may be irreparable.

### Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is a sexual act (contact or non-contact) carried out without the informed consent or knowledge of the other individual. Non-contact abuse may include sexual suggestions, salacious exposure to indecent material and indecent behaviour. Contact abuse may include rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult at risk has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting. Victims suffer emotionally and psychologically. If you believe there is any issue about an individual's capacity to consent to any relationship, you should seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Officer(s) within 24 hours.

### Possible indicators of abuse:

- low self esteem
- full or partial disclosure
- nightmares
- signs of depression or stress
- unusual difficulty in walking and sitting
- torn, stained or bloody underclothes
- pain, itching or any injury to genital area
- sexually transmitted diseases/infections
- bites, bruising or any marks on inner thighs or arms
- significant change in sexual behaviour/language
- agitation during personal care/examination
- pregnancy in a person who is unable to consent

### Neglect

Neglectful behaviour is any pattern of activity or omission which seriously impairs an individual. This includes: ignoring a need for medical or physical care, failing to provide

access to appropriate health, social care, religious or educational services, or the deliberate withholding of necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating. Also denying contact with family, failing to intervene in situations where there is danger to the vulnerable adult or to others, particularly when a person lacks the mental capacity to assess risk.

Possible indicators of abuse:

- poor physical condition, e.g. rashes, sores, weight loss/gain
- inadequate heating/lighting
- inadequate clothing in poor condition
- malnutrition
- failure to access medical care or give prescribed medication when required
- lack of assistance with eating and drinking
- failure to ensure privacy and dignity
- inconsistent/reluctant contact with health or social agencies
- inappropriate clothing
- sensory deprivation
- poor personal hygiene

Financial abuse

Financial abuse is the willful use or manipulation of the vulnerable adult's property, assets, or monies without their informed consent or authorisation. This can include theft or fraud of monies or possessions, exploitation, pressure or undue influence to change wills, financial arrangements, or the misuse of property, possessions or benefits .<sup>4</sup>

Possible indicators of abuse:

- signatures on cheques etc. that do not resemble the adult's signature or which are signed when the adult cannot write
- sudden changes in bank activity including unexplained withdrawals of large sums of money
- inclusion of additional names on an adult's bank account
- issues with Powers of Attorney
- abrupt changes to or creation of wills
- sudden appearance of previously uninvolved relatives claiming their rights to a vulnerable person's affairs or possessions
- unexplained transfers of assets to family member or someone outside the



family

- numerous unpaid bills, overdue rent, when someone should have been paying these for the vulnerable person

<sup>4</sup> It is worthy of note that the Fraud Act 2006, section 4, created a specific criminal offence of fraud by a person in a position of trust.

- a carer asks financial questions about a person, unrelated to their care
- lack of amenities, such as TV, personal grooming items, appropriate clothing, that the vulnerable person should be able to afford
- unexplained disappearance of money or valuable possessions e.g. silverware or jewellery

You should be alert to the deliberate isolation of a vulnerable person from friends and family resulting in the carer alone having total control.

### Discriminatory abuse

Discriminatory abuse is maltreatment or harassment that is based on any characteristic of a person's identity, such as their race, sex, or disability. Many of the signs of discriminatory abuse will be the same as for emotional abuse (see above). The impact of discriminatory abuse can lead to significant self-harming and must never be underestimated.

The emotional and psychological impact of discriminatory abuse can cause untold damage to the individual, both physically and mentally and in many cases leads to self-harm and tragically in some cases, suicide.

### Institutional abuse

Institutional abuse is when a culture of poor practice or maltreatment within a setting becomes routine at the expense of good professional practice. It may be exercised through defamatory attitudes, negative stereotyping, and abusive behaviours which are not corrected. Local authorities and churches should promote good practice in adult care.

Possible indicators of abuse:

- Lack of respect and dignity
- Name calling – inappropriate ways of addressing people

- Inappropriate use of power or control
- Inability to make choices and decisions
- Agitation when routine is broken
- Patterns of challenging behaviour
- Inappropriate use of power or control
- Inadequate staffing levels
- People being hungry or dehydrated
- Poor standards of care

### Spiritual abuse

Within faith communities harm can be caused by the inappropriate use of religious belief or practices. This can include the misuse of the authority of leadership, penitential discipline, oppressive teaching, or intrusive healing and deliverance ministries, which may result in both vulnerable adults and children experiencing physical, emotional, or sexual harm.

Churches need to avoid any practice which could be seen as an attempt to 'force' religious values or behaviours onto vulnerable people. Additionally, spiritual abuse may include attempts to direct what people believe and do, and to deny choices.

### Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is the use of forms of control and / or maltreatment within an intimate or domestic relationship. Types of domestic abuse include: **Physical** - For example: hitting, slapping, burning, pushing, restraining, giving too much medication or the wrong medication, assault with everyday implements such as kitchen knives, kicking, biting, punching, shoving, smashing someone's possessions, imprisoning them or forcing them to use illegal drugs as a way of blackmailing and controlling them. **Psychological** - (also called emotional, mental, or verbal abuse) For example, shouting, swearing, frightening, blaming, ignoring or humiliating someone, blackmailing them, threatening harm to children or pets if they misbehave, ridiculing every aspect of their appearance and skills, keeping them deliberately short of sleep, being obsessively and irrationally jealous, keeping them isolated from friends and family, threatening suicide or self-harm. **Sexual** – For example, forcing someone to take part in any sexual activity without consent, e.g. rape or sexual assault, forcing them or blackmailing them into sexual acts with other people, forcing children to watch sexual acts, sexual name calling, imposition of dress codes upon a partner, involvement in the sex trade or pornography, knowingly passing on Sexually Transmitted Infections, controlling access to contraception. **Economic / financial** – For example, the illegal or unauthorised use of someone's

property, money, pension book or other valuables, forcing them to take out loans, keeping them in poverty, demanding to know every penny they spend, refusing to let them use transport or have money to pay for it. **Spiritual abuse** can also be part of Domestic Abuse.

Stalking and cyber-stalking are also forms of control and abuse. Church staff and volunteers should remain alert to the use of words, physical or sexual practices to demean and control a vulnerable adult.

Possible indicators of abuse:

- has unexplained bruises or injuries
- shows signs of feeling suicidal
- becomes unusually quiet or withdrawn
- has panic attacks
- has frequent absences from work or other commitments
- wears clothes that conceal even on warm days
- stops talking about her/his partner
- is anxious about being out or rushes away

#### **4. Guidelines for all Vineyard Bath staff and volunteers**

Staff and volunteers must at all times show respect and understanding for individual's rights, safety and welfare, and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the ethos and principles of Vineyard Bath Church.

Respect

Staff and volunteers are committed to:

- Treating vulnerable adults with respect and dignity
- Always listening to what a person is saying
- Valuing each vulnerable adult
- Recognising the unique contribution each individual can make
- Encouraging and praising each vulnerable adult

Example

Staff and volunteers will:

- Provide an example which we would wish others to follow
- Use appropriate language with vulnerable people and challenge any inappropriate

language used by a young person or child or an adult working alongside vulnerable adults

- Respect a person's right to privacy

## Physical contact

Staff and volunteers should never:

- Engage in sexually provocative or rough physical games, including horseplay
- Allow, or engage in, inappropriate touching of any kind

## General

Staff and volunteers should:

- Be aware that someone might misinterpret our actions no matter how well intentioned
- Never draw any conclusions about others without checking the facts
- Never allow ourselves to be drawn into inappropriate attention seeking situations such as tantrums or crushes
- Never exaggerate or trivialise abuse issues or make suggestive remarks or gestures about, or to a vulnerable adult, even in fun

## Relationships

Staff and volunteers who are involved in relationships with other members of staff or volunteers should ensure that their personal relationships do not adversely affect their role within or the work of Vineyard Bath.

## Sharing information

Good communication is essential in any organisation. In Vineyard Bath every effort will be made to assure that, should individuals have concerns, they will be listened to and taken seriously. It is the responsibility of Vineyard Bath to ensure that information is available to, and exchanged between all those involved in this organisation and its activities.

Any disclosure made by a vulnerable adult or any concerns that become apparent must be treated with sensitivity and any sharing of information must be carried out on a strictly 'need to know' basis. The first priority should always be to ensure the safety and protection of vulnerable adults and Church guidance advises, "Where a vulnerable

person is judged to <sup>5</sup> be at risk of significant harm or an adult is likely to harm themselves or others, usually it will be legally possible, appropriate and highly desirable to disclose relevant information to the public authorities for the sake of protecting that vulnerable person” . All concerns therefore <sup>6</sup> should in the first instance be passed to the Designated Safeguarding Officer(s), within 24 hours.

## Training

All staff and volunteers shall have access to appropriate training on a regular basis, at least every two years.

## **5. Procedures following a disclosure or concern**

The safeguarding of vulnerable adults is everybody’s responsibility and concerns about vulnerable people can emerge in a number of ways. When responding to a concern, the CCPAS (The Churches’ Child Protection Advisory Service) is available to contact via their 24 hour helpline (0845 120 4550).

The core actions that should always be taken are:

- taking any emergency action needed to alleviate any immediate risk to life or limb (call 999)
- discussing any concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Officer(s)
- making a brief factual note of what has been seen, heard or caused concerned (within an hour when possible)
- listening, avoiding asking leading questions and treating all information confidentially
- ensuring safeguarding action is taken, supporting the adult, if they have capacity, to make a referral when this is the action they choose to take.

## Additional guidance when responding to concerns raised

There are many reasons why individuals do not disclose mistreatment or abuse, perhaps personal or family reasons or fear. Some people blame themselves for what has happened or make excuses for their ‘abusers’ particularly where they rely on them for care, support, shelter or companionship. Fear of ‘getting a loved one into trouble’ or losing contact with them altogether may be very real. Consequently victims may refuse to speak to the police, especially in the initial stages even if the situation is extremely serious.

If someone tells you about mistreatment or abuse or you have concerns about a vulnerable adult, your role is to respond sensitively and provide support. Ascertain what the vulnerable adult wants to do about the situation and consult the Designated Safeguarding Officer(s)

<sup>5</sup> No Secrets (Department of Health) 2000 <sup>6</sup> The House of

Bishops guidance 'Promoting a Safe Church' 2006

within 24 hours. The use of diagrams and sketches is often very useful in trying to accurately record a concern. Date and sign your notes and keep them safe.

When responding to a disclosure,  
do:

- assure them you are taking them seriously
- stay calm, the person concerned is likely to be anxious and need reassuring
- listen attentively and accept what is being said - your role is to pass on the concern
- let the person tell you in their own words - avoid any assumptions or suggesting explanations
- keep any questions to a minimum
- record what is said and seen using their own words or actions
- let them know that you have a duty to speak to your Designated Safeguarding Officer(s) about the situation and that their concerns may have to be shared with others who could have a part to play in protecting them (this should be done within 24 hours)
- reassure them that they will be fully involved in any decisions about what will happen next
- explain that you will try to take steps to protect them from further harm

When responding to a disclosure, do  
not:

- press for more details, someone more appropriate may do this at a later point
- be judgmental, jump to conclusions or voice your own opinion
- promise to keep secrets or keep complete confidentiality
- discuss the information with the alleged abuser
- attempt to deal with the problem alone, or try to investigate it

These simple actions will help to protect a vulnerable adult against further abuse.

## Record keeping

In any case where an allegation is made, or someone in Vineyard Bath has concerns, a record should be made. Details must include, as far as practical:

- Name of vulnerable adult
- Home Address (if known)
- Date of Birth (if known)
- Name/s and Address of carer, family member or the person close to the vulnerable person
- Telephone numbers if available
- Is the person making the report expressing their own concerns, or passing on those of somebody else? If so, record details;
- What has prompted the concerns?
- Include dates and times of any specific incidents
- Has the vulnerable adult been spoken to?
- If so, what was said?
- Has anybody been alleged to be the abuser?
- If so, record details
- Who has this been passed on to, in order that appropriate action is taken? E.g. Vineyard Bath's leadership team, Designated Safeguarding Officer(s), social care
- Has anyone else been consulted?

All records, information and confidential notes will be kept on a secure electronic file. Only the Designated Safeguarding Officer(s) or appropriate staff will have access to these files.

## Designated Safeguarding Officer

The Designated Safeguarding Officer at Vineyard Bath is Kev Clark, The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer is Lizzie Norman.

In the event of a disclosure or concern being raised with the Designated Safeguarding Officer(s), the Officer(s) will discuss their concerns both with CCPAS (tel: 0845 120 4550) The Designated Safeguarding Officer(s) will agree with the appropriate agency how the carers or family members will be informed, if appropriate. Confidentiality must be maintained and information relating to vulnerable adults shared on a strictly need to know basis.

Alleged abuse by staff, leaders, volunteers or trustees

When an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer, then the allegation must be passed to your Designated Safeguarding Officer(s). If the allegation concerns the Designated Safeguarding Officer(s), the allegation must be directed to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The Designated Officer(s) or LADO contacted will record a note of the consultation and will advise on the appropriate action that needs to be taken.

Vulnerable Adult Policy

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