

Interim Policy Statement on Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable People in the Orthodox Church

All of God's people are uniquely valuable and worthy of respect and care. This guidance is provided to the parishes of the Exarchate of Western Europe in the UK whilst full policies and guidance are being developed. There need not be any moral judgement in safeguarding vulnerable people; the parish needs to know the risks and manage those risks accordingly.

SCOPE: there are legal definitions for children and vulnerable adults¹, but anyone may become vulnerable without the parish knowing, so this policy applies to ALL people in the parish, visitors as well as members.

The priest in charge is responsible for ensuring these measures are implemented:

- All people in holy orders or in regular contact with children and vulnerable adults shall be subject to Enhanced CRB checks. The results of these checks shall be provided to the Dean of Presbyters.
- Each parish shall nominate an independent welfare officer, not in holy orders or related to someone in holy orders, to be a contact should anyone wish to report unsafe activities.
- In this parish/community this welfare person is _____
- If this person is not available phone CHILDLINE: 0800 1111 or your local social services.

People in this parish/community will:

- Treat all children and vulnerable people with respect & dignity
- Watch our language, tone of voice and body language and avoid inappropriate or suggestive contact
- Not use physical punishment to discipline children-this is illegal
- Always aim to work where another adult can see or hear all our interactions with vulnerable people
- Ensure that each group includes a female helper, if possible.
- Respond warmly to a child who needs comforting but make sure there are other adults around.
- Administer any necessary First Aid with others around. Record any concerning incidents and give the information to the person named above.

People in this parish/community will NOT :

- Invade a person's privacy whilst washing or toileting.
- Play rough physical or sexually provocative games.
- Be sexually suggestive about or to person, even in fun.
- Touch a person inappropriately or obtrusively.
- Scapegoat, ridicule or reject a child, vulnerable person or group.
- Give lifts to children or vulnerable adults on their own or on your own.
- Share sleeping accommodation with young people.
- Invite a young person to their home alone.
- Permit abusive peer activities e.g. initiation

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/47/section/59>

ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying.

- Allow unknown adults access to children.
- Allow strangers to give children lifts.

Disclosure

If an disclosure or admission of abuse is made in the sacrament of Confession then confidentiality is considered absolute by the church, but is not clearly so under UK law. However, the priest (or bishop) should strongly encourage the person, in a pastorally sensitive manner, to make the disclosure or admission also to someone who can take the matter further. Outside sacramental confession, a person may try to insist on total confidentiality before speaking. There are considerable risks in receiving information on this basis both to the individuals who may be exposed to abuse and to the recipient, who is put in an impossible position. Therefore the recipient must make every effort to convince the person making the allegation, or admission, that total confidentiality is in no-one's best interest. If the person cannot be persuaded of this, then total confidentiality should generally be refused.

Outside sacramental confession, disclosure may be shared with others (like relevant statutory agencies) though only on a strict 'need to know' basis.

Signed to confirm implementation by the priest in charge:

Date:

This community/parish really wants to make sure that you are safe at all times

I'm worried about one of my friends, what can I do?

- Try and talk to your friend and ask them to tell you what is wrong.
- Don't be upset if they don't want to talk to you. It might be very difficult for them to speak about what is wrong, especially if they are scared or worried about what will happen if they do talk.
- If they don't want to talk to you, suggest that they talk to a teacher, the welfare person in this community who is:..... or someone else they trust, about what is happening.
- If they do want to talk, get someone to stand out of earshot, so they can't hear, but where they can see you at all time. This person will ensure that you both are safe.
- If there isn't anyone they feel that they can speak to, they can phone



- If your friend is being bullied, don't ignore it, as by doing so, you are helping the bully get away with it.

- Many young people feel sad or down from time to time. If your friend is depressed and feeling sad, try and encourage them to talk about how they're feeling to somebody they trust.
- Abuse can mean a lot of different things such as neglect, physical, emotional or sexual abuse. If someone you know is being abused in any way, then the most important thing to do is talk to someone about it. No-one has the right to hurt you or your friend or make them do anything that feels wrong. You have done the right thing in looking for ways to help your friend.

www.childline.org.uk