



Seventh-day  
Adventist® Church  
BRITISH UNION CONFERENCE

# SAFE AT HOME

## RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC ABUSE

### Policy, Procedures and Guidance



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# SAFE AT HOME

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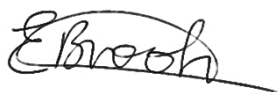
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## FOREWORD

Promoting the well-being of those created in the image of God is integral to the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As a church body we care for and strengthen each other physically and emotionally as well as spiritually. *Safe at Home* calls for us to do no more than purposefully reflect our God-given commission in the principles of how we behave towards one another.

These policies and the procedures are provided to guide and support you in fulfilling our shared responsibility to create a safe environment for all family members within in our homes. They will also provide the guidance necessary to hold those who perpetrate abuse responsible for their actions. Combatting domestic abuse is everybody's responsibility. It requires collaborative work not only in the various levels of church organisation but also with those agencies within our communities who possess the specialised skills and resources to assist those in need.

The real activity to safeguard survivors of abuse comes through our purposeful attitudes and actions in our daily Christian walk. I sincerely trust that we will work together under God's guidance in keeping our church family safe at home.



**Eglan Brooks**

BUC President

## INTRODUCTION

The Seventh-day Adventist Church places great importance upon family life. In line with our world church position statement<sup>1</sup> we affirm the dignity and worth of each human being and decry all forms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and family violence. The church recognises the global extent of this problem and the serious, long-term effects upon the lives of all involved. We therefore believe that Seventh-day Adventists must respond to abuse and family violence within both the church and the community. We believe that to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate and potentially extend such behaviour.

We are committed to maintain zero tolerance of abuse in all its forms. All are damaging and an evil in God's sight. The terms 'victims' and 'survivor' will be used interchangeably depending on the context. Survivor will be the preferred description conveying the truth that those who experience abuse can rise above their adversity.

*Safe at Home* sets out the Church's guidelines relating to changing the culture in which abuse thrives and taking practical steps to address it when it occurs. It also provides the procedures to be followed to reduce, to the minimum, the risk of abuse to children and adults within our households. It is our prayer that these resources will empower you to care effectively for those affected by domestic abuse. Our role is to exemplify the ministry of Jesus who declared, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18). God is on the side of the oppressed and we should be too, to "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; for the rights of all who are destitute" (Proverbs 31:8).

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<sup>1</sup>[General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists position statement on abuse and family violence \(1995\)](#)

## A. AIMS OF THIS POLICY

This document sets out the British Union Conference's (BUC) Domestic Abuse Policy and Procedures providing guidance on how local churches will implement its policy. It supports the Church's commitment to address and respond effectively to domestic abuse both within its own community and wider society. The aims of the policy are:

- To raise awareness about domestic abuse in local church communities.
- To increase awareness of and access to support services for victims of domestic abuse and where appropriate for perpetrators.
- To offer suitable training from appropriate specialist within the church and outside agencies for key staff and church leaders and to encourage church members to undertake basic training.
- To encourage churches to become places of safety.
- To encourage collaborative working among the various levels of church administration.

## B. POLICY STATEMENT

### 1. Statement of Beliefs

The Seventh-day Adventist Church places great importance upon family life and affirms the dignity and worth of each human being. It decries all forms of abuse, including domestic violence. Such behaviour is intimidating, hostile and/or offensive and undermines our biblical and moral values and destroys the trust between people in our community.

The BUC subscribes to the [General Conference Statement on Family Violence](#):

"The Bible clearly indicates that the distinguishing mark of Christian believers is the quality of their human relationships in the church and in the family. It is in the spirit of Christ to love and accept, to seek to affirm and build others up, rather than to abuse or tear one another down. There is no room among Christ's followers for tyrannical control and the abuse of power or authority. Motivated by their love for Christ, His disciples are called to show respect and concern for the welfare of others, to accept males and females as equals, and to acknowledge that every person has a right to respect and dignity. Failure to relate to others in this way violates their personhood and devalues human beings created and redeemed by God."

The church believes that such abusive behaviour is incompatible with Christianity and any profession of commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist faith. Therefore, it is inconceivable that individuals who, despite guidance and support, continue to choose to practise such behaviour, should be allowed to continue to represent the church in any capacity.

### 2. Why Have a Policy?

Domestic abuse is a tragic reality in both society in general and within the Church. The Church seeks to create an environment where all can feel safe from abuse. The purpose of these guidelines is to change attitudes and practices that allow abuse to thrive. It also seeks to provide clear practical guidance and procedures for addressing disclosures of domestic abuse. All church members have a responsibility to act in a manner that minimises risk and maximises support for survivors of abuse.

While the preservation of marriage and family remain the ideal goal, the primary purpose of intervention where abuse is taking place, is the safety of the victims. A failure to appreciate the inherent evil of domestic abuse results in churches becoming complicit with perpetrators by actively encouraging survivors to remain in abusive environments, taking ineffective action, or turning a blind eye where abuse occurs. This policy calls on all churches to adopt our [Safe at Home Charter](#) as its code of practice in dealing with domestic abuse. The charter summarises the Church's determination to end abuse in Adventist homes, and from those who used to be in an intimate relationship with those who are vulnerable. It encourages churches to become places of safety where domestic abuse is taken seriously, survivors are believed, and respected and alleged or known perpetrators are held accountable.

The Charter should be displayed in prominent places in each church so that all who enter will know where the church stands. These guidelines advocates that every church adopts a code of practice consistent with the Safe at Home Charter.

Developing policy is not just about having a policy statement but is also about gaining a working knowledge of the effects of domestic abuse on all involved and using pastoral and practical strategies to assist people who are in abusive relationships. A policy helps people think through the issues. Policy documents give a structure to the work of prevention and support and are a useful reference for monitoring.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church seeks to offer a safe place for all people in its community life, where boundaries that safeguard acceptable behaviour are known and respected, and where inappropriate practices or harmful behaviours and attitudes are openly addressed.

### **3. The Scope of the Policy and Guidelines**

These guidelines specifically apply to relationships within local churches and among members, officers and volunteers. Disclosures regarding paid employees of the church should be made to the employing organization directly in writing. Further advice on how to complain about an employee can be received by contacting the Executive Secretary of your conference/mission/union/organization. The Executive Secretary/President will then arrange for all such disclosures to be investigated and resolved in accordance with both the Church's beliefs and current employment law.

## **C. DOMESTIC ABUSE AND THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH**

There is a general assumption within the Church that male survivors of abuse among Christians are few and far between. However, the most extensive research on domestic abuse within the Adventist church shows a different picture. Research conducted by Dr René Drumm among 49 Adventist churches in the United States indicated that 90% of abusers were active church members who included, pastors, elders, deacons, chaplain, conference secretary, university professor, pathfinder leader and other church leaders. The study indicated that women in the Church are just as likely to be abused by their husbands as women in the general population. Even more surprising was the finding that men are more likely to be abused by their wives than those in the general population.<sup>2</sup> As previously noted, large disparities between male and female incidences occur when homicides, sexual assaults, severity of injury and frequency of attacks are factored in.<sup>3</sup> While male on female abuse will remain the primary focus of programming and provision, the suffering of male survivors must also be recognized and addressed.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church views all forms of abuse as antithetical to Christian values. In response the world headquarters of the church has embraced [enditnow](#). This is a global initiative to raise awareness and advocate for the end of violence around the world. It aims to mobilize Seventh-day Adventists around the world and invites other community groups to join in to resolve this worldwide issue.

This initiative, which extends to more than 200 countries and territories. enditnow is the most important stand the Seventh-day Adventist Church has ever taken regarding violence against men, women and children. Through this

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<sup>2</sup> [enditnow: Adventists Say No to Violence](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Domestic Abuse is a Gendered Crime](#)

campaign, more than 15 million Adventist church members—men, women, and children—are expected to create a global movement that will be mobilized within their own communities, where each person will actively work to create awareness and share solutions on ways to end this global problem.

## D. THE NATURE AND IMPACT OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

The statutory definition domestic abuse was updated by the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#). Domestic abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between someone aged 16 or over and someone to whom they are or have been “[personally connected](#)” whether they are partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. ‘Abusive behaviour’ is defined in the act as any of the following:

- physical or sexual
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse

‘Personally connected’ is defined in the act as parties who:

- are married to each other
- are civil partners of each other
- have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child
- are relatives

Domestic abuse occurs in relationships where one individual holds power over another and uses that power to harm. It consists of the violation of another person’s human rights. Essentially, domestic abuse is terrorism. Webster’s Dictionary defines terrorism as ‘the calculated use of violence (or threat of violence) against civilians in order to attain goals . . . through intimidation or coercion or instilling fear.’ Trauma specialist Dr Judith Herman has identified major commonalities between the experience of survivors of domestic violence and prisoners of war. She compares, ‘the survivors of vast concentration camps created by tyrants who rule nations and the survivors of small, hidden concentration camps created by tyrants who rule their homes’ (Dr Judith Herman, Trauma and Recovery, p3).

### 1. Who are the Victims?

Domestic abuse occurs across all of society, regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, wealth or geography.

#### Gender-based abuse

- The [Office for National Statistics](#) (November 2023) indicates that approximately 1 in 5 people aged 16 years and over (9.8 million) had experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 years.
- In the UK, women are more likely than men to be survivors of domestic violence.
- For every three survivors of domestic abuse, two will be female, one will be male. The [Crime Survey for England and Wales](#) March 2023 reported that
- Women are less likely to leave an abusive relationship at an earlier stage.
- One in four women and one in six to seven men suffer from domestic abuse in their lifetime.

- On average two women are killed by their partner or ex-partner every week in England and Wales.<sup>4</sup>
- Men are more than two times less likely to report incidences of abuse.
- Accurate figures will always be impossible to ascertain because domestic abuse is vastly underreported. For men, such reluctance to report is compounded by the stigma and shame attached to perceptions of weakness from society in general.
- Women in the SDA Church are just as likely to be abused by their husbands as women in the general population.<sup>5</sup>
- Men are more likely to be abused by their wives than those in the general population.

### Children and Young People

Children are also profoundly affected by domestic abuse and are at serious risk in abuse situations. In addition to the risk of physical harm, witnessing domestic violence can result in long-term emotional and psychological trauma across the life-span. Research has also indicated a strong connection between domestic violence and child abuse. Where domestic abuse is perpetrated in a family context, it is recommended that church leaders work in close liaison with designated safeguarding lead.

- 130,000 children live in households where there is high-risk domestic abuse<sup>6</sup>
- 64% of high and medium risk victims have children, on average 2 each<sup>7</sup>
- A quarter (25%) of children in high-risk domestic abuse households are under 3 years old. On average, high-risk abuse has been going on for 2.6 years, meaning these children are living with abuse for most of their life.<sup>8</sup>
- 62% of children living in domestic abuse households are directly harmed by the perpetrator of the abuse, in addition to the harm caused by witnessing the abuse of others.<sup>9</sup>
- 1 in 5 teenage girls have experienced domestic abuse in their dating relationship. [National Centre for Domestic Violence](#).
- those in the age group 16-24 are those most at risk of domestic abuse. Although some features of teenage relationship abuse are similar to adult domestic abuse, the forms and experience of this issue, as well as the challenges in seeking and providing services, make many of the issues faced by teenagers unique.<sup>10</sup>

Many young people will be experiencing multiple risk factors. However, as with abuse in adult relationships, teenage relationship abuse occurs across diverse groups and cultures. Teenage relationship abuse can occur in various forms, including verbal, emotional, physical, sexual, and financial, and the experience may have both immediate and long-term effects on young people. It is sometimes the case that there are unclear parameters between survivor and perpetrator which adds to the complexity of cases.

### Parents

Child to Parent Abuse (CPA) is where a child (of any age) displays repeated abusive behaviours towards a parental figure. This abuse may be physical, verbal, economic, damage to property, stealing from a parent, digital, coercive or even sexual. Many of these families may be facing multiple issues such as substance abuse, mental health issues and domestic violence. The lack of recognition of this issue means that many families may not recognise that they need support and may feel unable to ask for help due to feeling stigma and shame.

<sup>4</sup> [What is Domestic Abuse: The Facts - Refuge](#)

<sup>5</sup> [enditnow: Adventists Say No to Violence](#)

<sup>6</sup> [SafeLives - Getting it Right First Time: Policy Report 2015](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Safe Young Lives: Young People and Domestic Abuse 2015](#)

- CPA thought to occur in at least 3% of UK homes, although the real figure could be much higher.<sup>11</sup>
- 43 per cent of cases of child to parent abuse are not reported to the police (Brennan et al., 2022).<sup>12</sup>
- According to the report "[Hidden Harms](#)" by the Violence Reduction Unit, at least 40% of child-to-parent violence and abuse incidents are unreported to police.
- The majority of offences reported were categorised by the police as 'Violence Against the Person' (60%), followed by 'Criminal Damage' (25%).<sup>13</sup>
- Of the victims, 89 per cent were parents and six per cent were grandparents (Brennan et al., 2022).<sup>14</sup>
- mothers (and female carers) appear to be much more likely to be targeted than fathers/male carers, at a ratio of approximately 8:2<sup>15</sup>
- 65 per cent of incidents reported to the MPS involved those aged 19-25 years, with 34 per cent aged 15-18 years, and one per cent aged 12-14 years<sup>16</sup>

There are also often issues of lack of awareness of existing support (notably family support groups); parents not seeing themselves as legitimate recipients of support; lack of knowledge on drugs, alcohol and their effects; an 'it'll never happen to us' mind-set; and a lack of consensus on the best course of action within couples.

It is important to recognise the effects that child or adolescent to parent abuse may have on both the parent and the young person and to establish trust and support for both. It is also important that a young person using abusive behaviour against a parent receives a safeguarding response. Remember this is domestic abuse and general domestic abuse considerations apply.

See the Home Office: [Information guide: adolescent to parent violence and abuse \(APVA\)](#) and HP Inspectorate of Probation: [Child to Parent Abuse](#).

### **Elder Abuse**

Abuse of older people is a hidden, and often ignored, problem in society. No standard definition of elder abuse applies within the UK public sector. In 1993 Action on Elder Abuse (now [Hourglass](#)) established the following definition of elder abuse as 'A single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person'. [Age UK](#) share the following data:

- 1 in 30 people aged 60 to 74 and approximately 1 in 50 people aged 75+ have been subjected to domestic abuse in the 2023.
- 400,000 older people were victims of domestic abuse in 2023 in England and Wales alone.
- older people are just as likely to be abused by an adult child or grandchild as they are a spouse or partner. Abusers may be a partner, relative, neighbour, a paid or volunteer care worker or other professional.
- men become at increased risk of being subjected to domestic abuse as they age.
- many older people subjected to abuse have a health condition or disability, which may mean they rely on their abuser for care and support. Older people may also be abused by a person they care for.

If you become aware or concerned about someone you know, it is important that you refer the case to your local Domestic Abuse agencies. Since domestic violence (DV) does not always meet the threshold for intervention in adult social care, DV services are always the best option in addition to whatever support services Adult Social Care

<sup>11</sup> [Child to Parent Abuse: supporting Parents and Professionals](#) – Parental Education Growth Support (PEGS)

<sup>12</sup> [Amanda Holt - Child to Parent Abuse – Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation \(2022\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> [ibid.](#)

<sup>14</sup> [ibid.](#)

<sup>15</sup> [ibid.](#)

<sup>16</sup> [ibid.](#)

can offer. Cases of alleged Elder Abuse are assessed at a local Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). The Domestic Violence MARAC is a meeting where agencies talk about the risk of future harm to people experiencing domestic abuse and draw up an action plan to help manage that risk. You should be aware that, despite your concern, any older person has the right to decline assistance. However, a statutory obligation exists if the person is an 'adult at risk'.

### **People with Disabilities -**

People with disabilities are often in particularly vulnerable circumstances. Certain disabilities, particularly physical disabilities, may decrease their ability to physically defend themselves and escape from abuse. Other disabilities can limit a person's ability to understand and recognise potential signs of abuse.

- Around 1 in 7 (14.1%) disabled adults aged 16 to 59 years experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2019, compared with 1 in 20 (5.4%) non-disabled adults. ([Outcomes for Disabled People, ONS 2021](#))
- People with learning disabilities are three times more likely to experience domestic abuse, and in the last year alone it has happened to nearly one in every five people. ([Outcomes for Disabled People, ONS 2021](#)).
- Disabled women (17.5%) were more than twice as likely to experience domestic abuse in the last year than non-disabled women (6.7%) and people with learning disabilities experience the highest rate of domestic abuse (19.1%) ([Outcomes for Disabled People, ONS 2021](#)).
- Disabled people experience domestic abuse for longer periods of time, and more severe and frequent abuse. This may include more severe coercion and control, or abuse from carers ([Disability and Domestic Abuse - Public Health England, 2015](#)).
- Disabled people experiencing domestic abuse are twice as likely to have planned or attempted suicide. - SafeLives Crime survey ([Disability and Domestic Abuse - Public Health England, 2015](#)).

### **LGBT**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is committed to being to be an organisation that is as diverse, equal and inclusive as we can make it within the biblical values of love, compassion, truth and justice. The Church has a duty of care where individuals within the Church community who either identify as LGBT or have a homosexual orientation are victims of domestic abuse.

- It is estimated that about 25% of LGBT people experience domestic abuse, a figure similar to women in opposite-gendered relationships.<sup>17</sup>
- Underreporting of abuse in LGBT relationships is often compounded by the fear of sexual orientation being revealed.
- Perpetrators may threaten to 'out' the victim to friends, family, religious communities, co-workers, and others as a method of control.
- The often-secretive nature of homosexual relationships can create an environment in which abuse thrives and victims are reluctant to seek help.

LGBT victims of abuse may blame the abuse on being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, however abuse is always the fault of the abuser whatever the circumstance. In seeking to support LGBT victims of abuse, it is vital that pastoral carers do so with a non-judgemental attitude. The primary objective of support in such instances is the safety of the individual.

## **2. Recognising signs of domestic abuse**

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<sup>17</sup> [SafeLives: Free to Be Safe: LGBT+ People Experiencing Domestic Abuse](#)

- The victim is never alone and is always accompanied by their partner
- The victim seems very isolated from friends and family
- The victim does not have any friends or gradually withdraws
- The victim stops attending church
- The perpetrator may talk for or over the victim
- The victim may look or act nervous or anxious in front of their partner
- The victim may have bruises or injuries with no plausible explanation
- The victim may justify the perpetrator's behaviour
- The victim may be reluctant to give their home address and may discourage visitors
- The victim does not have access to money or other necessities
- The perpetrator is always checking up on the victim
- The victim becomes withdrawn, loses confidence, and changes their appearance

### 3. Barriers to Disclosing Domestic Abuse

- have tried to disclose before, but not been believed
- be dependent upon the perpetrator
- be prevented from speaking to others without the perpetrator present
- be fearful of the consequences, including involvement of police or child protection services
- feel ashamed/embarrassed/guilty
- fear not being listened to/understood/taken seriously/believed
- not realise their experience is abusive
- have problems communicating with others
- believe (or hope) that the abuse will not be repeated
- not know who to tell
- never have been asked the right questions to lead them to open up.

### 4. Barriers to Accountability

- Denial – a refusal to believe that abuse is happening
- Cultural acceptance – norms of behaviour differ from culture to culture
- Fear of reprisal from the perpetrator or their supporters
- Misplaced priorities - preserving the family unit is prioritised over safety
- Deference to leaders – the desire to protect those of 'high standing' in the community
- Shame culture – it may be easier to endure the abuse than to 'bring shame' on the family
- Apathy – the lack of desire to get involved in other people's business
- Moral justification – the belief that the abuse is 'the right thing to do'

## E. AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Local churches should be proactive in clearly identifying and communicating who bears primary responsibility for addressing issues pertaining to domestic abuse. It may be possible for this to be part of the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), an Elder, or fall under the remit of someone specifically appointed to fill the role. In any event, responsibilities should be carried out in close liaison with the DSL where children and adults at risk are involved.

Responsibilities entail:

- a) encouraging the dissemination of and use of this policy and guidelines;
- b) developing a library of resource materials and information, using available resources such as those listed in the [Appendices](#).
- c) identify the best place to display relevant local phone numbers and support services;

- d) being a point of contact for ministers, lay leaders, and church members and being able to offer advice and information to them;
- e) advising and informing the district, and monitoring practice;
- f) enabling and encouraging workshops and other forms of training through networking with professionals within the church and local support services and agencies
- g) encouraging support for the annual Abuse Prevention Day

## **F. TRAINING FOR CHURCH LEADERS**

The insidious nature, far-reaching extent and the great need to provide practical remedies for victims and perpetrators of abuse necessitates that training for pastors and elders is mandated in a similar way that safeguarding training is required. Copious anecdotal evidence indicates that inadequate responses to domestic abuse on the part of church leaders not only exposes victims to greater danger but may also result in church leaders intentionally or inadvertently colluding with perpetrators. See [Appendices](#) for organisation that offer training).

## **G. COLLABORATION WITH OUTSIDE AGENCIES**

The goal to eradicate domestic abuse within the Church is not an undertaking the Church can accomplish in isolation. It is imperative that the Seventh-day Adventist Church at every level works in collaboration with the agencies within their communities who are specially trained and equipped to intervene in instances of domestic abuse. These agencies include, but are not limited to, the Police, Children's Services, The National Probation Service, legal professionals, housing authorities and health professionals. Seventh-day Adventist support and interventions should always operate alongside domestic abuse support services, like Refuge, Women's Aid and Domestic Violence Intervention Project (DVIP), not as an alternative. All training provided to pastoral workers must include an awareness of the existence of these services and the help they can provide. See [Appendices for Support Organisations](#).

### H. HOW CHURCHES CAN ADDRESS DOMESTIC ABUSE?

#### 1. The role of the church

The culture of the local church is vitally important. A church life, which has an openness, where processes are transparent, and people feel they can be honest with each other, will allow an abused person or an abuser to talk about what is happening.

This involves providing resources for individuals and church communities so that they can respond appropriately and helpfully to disclosures of domestic abuse, recognising that abused women and men find it difficult to tell their story and may approach a friend in the congregation rather than a minister or pastoral worker.

Professional expertise is essential for more specialist work, but it is essential that tackling domestic abuse is not side-lined but is made the responsibility of the whole church community. Training in how to respond is also essential – if someone is not believed, or is not listened to appropriately, or if good information and support is not given, their long-term progress can be severely impaired.

The role of the church is to walk alongside the survivor on the journey back to wholeness. This may be done in partnership with specialist help from other agencies. Churches can offer real friendship at times of isolation and low self-esteem, offering encouragement and hope so that the individual can start to feel safe.

#### Raising awareness through teaching and worship

- a) Worship leaders can speak out against domestic abuse in preaching, teaching and prayers.
- b) Greater attention can be given to annual Abuse Awareness Day's both in the Church and national calendars. Churches can also highlight the General Conference's 'End it Now' initiative - [enditnow.org](http://enditnow.org)
- c) Ministers, deacons and church leaders should be offered resources so that they can give clear statements that domestic abuse is wrong and tackle the myths that perpetuate disregard of abuse.
- d) Gender inequality must continually be challenged in all aspects of the life of the Church. Opportunity to discuss these issues within the church community should be offered in local churches.
- e) Language should reflect our beliefs about equality and dignity, and not increasingly marginalise those who may already feel of little value.
- f) Thought needs to be given to the way we use the Bible, and how theological emphases can be affirming or damaging to those caught up in abusive situations.
- g) Departments can work collaboratively to combat domestic abuse.
- h) Men's Ministries and men's groups can take a proactive role in addressing domestic abuse. Men are generally best placed to influence the thinking of other men regarding abuse against women.
- i) Up to date information on domestic abuse should be provided on the church's website.
- j) Every church should make church members aware of who to approach when they are ready to disclose domestic abuse. Each church is responsible for appointing properly trained individuals.

### **Working with children and young people**

- a) There is an increasing awareness of Safeguarding throughout the Church in relation to children, young people and adults at risk. An addition to existing policies is recommended, providing clear information on what to do if a child or young person discloses information about domestic abuse. This should include recognising the need to ask someone competent for advice, and who to approach.
- b) Workers with young people, Junior Sabbath School teachers, Pathfinder leaders and leaders of weekday clubs for children and young people should be given some training on domestic abuse, alongside leaders ministering to the adult congregation.
- c) Leaders should aim to affirm and model good, positive relationships in their work with young people.
- d) Awareness of the local schools' Personal, Health and Social Education (PHSE) programme can be used to open discussion about respect in relationships.
- e) Youth leaders can be encouraged to invite guest speakers to stimulate discussion, on the theme of domestic abuse and dating violence.
- f) Youth programming should be proactive in addressing and challenging popular culture that seeks to subjugate and denigrate women through film, music, pornography, print media and any other form of expression.
- g) The highest rate of divorce is among those who marry as teenagers. A rigorous process of pre-engagement and pre-marital preparation will help young people to identify and practice healthy relational principles.

**NB** - Disclosures of domestic abuse by children and young people must be taken seriously. The designated Safeguarding should always be contacted for advice.

### **Sharing information about local agencies**

Local churches are encouraged to display posters and information from the local support agencies - Domestic Violence Forum, Women's Aid, Refuge, Victim Support, Respect, National DV Helpline – and to make the phone number of the local women's refuge available in the church and hall. See the Resources and References section of these procedures, for contact information. Due to the potential dangers of reprisals from victims accessing information about domestic abuse, resources should also be made available in locations that are inaccessible to perpetrators i.e. leaflets in toilets.

Information on domestic abuse displayed prominently can help to make it clear that the church is safe for victims to talk and is a place where perpetrators will be challenged.

### **Training people at all levels of the Church**

Training and awareness-raising will need to include those preparing for pastoral ministry, in-service training, and training in local churches. Basic awareness of the extent and effects of domestic abuse on individuals, families and society should be an essential part of core training for all pastoral carers. Basic listening skills, and understanding when more help is needed, must be included in the training for pastoral carers. Training will assist individuals and churches to reflect on how domestic abuse affects everyone caught up in it, and how best they might support someone within their church community.

Training should stress the importance of collaborative working with other agencies. This can include both the sharing of good practice and benefitting from specialist expertise. Agencies such as Women's Aid, or the local Safeguarding Board may offer training modules at different levels for other statutory and voluntary bodies. They are usually very willing to work with churches to provide training or information. Collaborative working has a strategic place in enabling the church to play a positive role in the community.

In addition to face-to-face training, accredited online training options provide additional opportunities to equip church leaders with the knowledge and skills to address matters of domestic abuse. (See [Appendices](#), p22 for a list of organizations who provide training)

In the case of domestic abuse, the adage applies, that 'prevention is better than cure'. Because domestic abuse is such a pervasive evil within the church, combatting this scourge must be a collaborative initiative among the departments and institutions of the church, including family, schools, and seminaries.

**Please note:** Specialist training is required for those addressing abuse and abusive behaviours with victims, survivors, children and perpetrators.

## I. WHAT TO DO WHEN A DISCLOSURE IS MADE

The guidance below aims to assist you in responding to people disclosing abuse. Remember that the paramount concern is the safety of the victim and any children in the household. As you seek to assist victims, bear in mind that telephone calls, holding information about support services for domestic abuse, the use of texts and e-mails and accessing relevant websites all create potential risks for those experiencing abuse. Support should also include information on how to cover their tracks.

It often takes a great deal of courage for survivors of abuse to seek help. The initial response they receive will likely determine whether they open up further or close down. The first person a survivor discloses to can be the first step in enabling them to seek help. It is important to acknowledge where you can and cannot help. Please refer to the [Disclosure Flow Chart](#) for immediate responses and [Recording Disclosure Conversation](#).

### 1. DOs and DON'Ts with an Abused Person

#### DO:

- a) **Do ask.** Most survivors want to be asked. If you suspect that someone is a survivor of abuse and you feel able to broach the subject, you could offer help by inquiring if everything is ok at home or if someone is hurting them. Ask open ended questions that will help them talk. You can ask direct questions like, "Has anyone close to you made you frightened?"
- b) **Do find a private place.** 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).
- c) **Do take plenty of time to listen and believe what they say.** If they sense disbelief, they may be discouraged from speaking again. It is important to be non-judgemental, as people may be afraid that they will be condemned by the church. Treat people with respect and sensitivity – it is difficult enough to talk about these issues.
- d) **Do affirm the strength and courage it takes to have survived the abuse and to talk about it.** Reassure them that, whatever the circumstances, abuse is not justified and not their fault.
- e) **Do express concern for their safety and immediate welfare.** Do they have somewhere to stay?
- f) **Do assess the degree of urgency and risk to children.** 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. Where there are children involved, consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Officer is advised. (see Appendix 3 - Disclosure Flow Chart).
- g) **Do ask them about what support is available to them from friends and family.** Do be sensitive to people's backgrounds and cultures and check your own and their understanding of how the cultural issues affect them.

- h) **Do encourage them to seek professional help.** Local domestic abuse services 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. People may disclose long-standing abuse, which may have ended or be on-going. A victim may be safe but traumatised, where there is no new allegation or disclosure, but support and healing are still needed.
- i) **Do give her/him referral information.** However, be mindful that any access to helpful information creates a potential risk if discovered by the abuser. Emphasize the need to cover their tracks.
- j) **Do provide or point them to a source of spiritual support.** Abuse not only distorts a victim's concept of self but also their concept of God. Victims need to know that the choices they make are consistent with God's will for their lives as expressed in the Bible (see Appendix 4 – Domestic Abuse and the Bible). Survivors of abuse require long-term pastoral care.
- k) **Do provide referrals for clinical counselling support.** Domestic abuse is a trauma that leaves lasting spiritual, emotional, and psychological damage that requires God's healing grace and professional support.
- l) **Do connect them with a same-gender social support network.** This can be a vital source of encouragement.
- m) **Do encourage them to focus on their own needs.** This is something they may not have been able to do since the abuse began but which is critical in helping them to change their situation.
- n) **Do ask them what they want from you and the Church.** Offer help which is in response to their needs and preferences and which lets them keep in control. Let them know that while the church is always there to help, they may require professional support as well.
- o) **Do find out if there are criminal proceedings.** Find out if there has been a complaint to the police, and if so, what action has been taken? If the disclosure is about a third party, ascertain whether they are aware that it is being shared and if they are, find out if they wish to seek help.
- p) **Do respect the person's choices.** Help them clarify their options and provide support. Even if victims choose initially to return to the abuser, it is their choice. According to the National Domestic Abuse Hotline, on average, victims will leave the abuser seven times before they 'stay left'.
- q) **Do encourage them to think about a safety plan.** Set aside some money; copies of important papers for them and children; a change of clothes hidden or in care of a friend if s/he decides to go to a shelter. Plan how to exit the house the next time the abuser is violent. Plan what to do about the children if they are at school; if they are asleep, etc. This is both practical and helps the survivor stay in touch with the reality of the abuser's violence. Safety planning is a process that is ongoing (see Appendix 8 – Domestic violence Personalised Safety Plan).

- r) **Do protect their confidentiality.** DO NOT give information about them or their whereabouts to the abuser or to others who might pass information on to the abuser. Do not discuss with anyone who might inadvertently pass information on to the abuser. It is vital that those offering support keep confidences over addresses, information about children and schools etc, and about where and when it is safe to contact the person who is being abused. It is important not to undertake to pass on letters from the perpetrator - the victim knows where the perpetrator lives and can contact them if they wish.

#### Immediate action

- **Do dial 999** 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 (Social) Services/the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) 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 DSL will also need to be informed.
- **Mental capacity.** If you think the person making the disclosure of abuse may lack mental capacity to make decisions affecting their safety, then it is very important you speak to your District Safeguarding Officer, who will inform Adult Safeguarding (Social Services). It is not your job to make an assessment about whether or not the person lacks capacity in this situation.

#### DON'T:

- a) **Don't promise complete confidentiality.** Depending on the nature of what is disclosed you may be obligated to report to law enforcement or child protection services. The survivor's right to privacy must be balanced against their safety and the safety of children.
- b) **Don't make promises you can't keep.** They may be safer in your office, but you cannot keep them safe outside your office.
- c) **Don't recommend marriage counselling.** Domestic abuse is not a communication or conflict resolution problem. It is an abuse of power. Marriage counselling creates greater danger for abuse survivors. In abuse situations, the priority is the safety of the victims – NOT the preservation of the marriage.
- d) **Don't blame the survivor.** This can be done directly or by implication. Don't ask why questions with survivors that can imply blame, i.e. Why do you stay? Don't ask insensitive questions like, 'What did you do that set him off?' 'Why don't you try being more submissive?' Abuse is ALWAYS the abuser's choice. Watch your terminology and words. Survivors are not addicted to the relationship or co-dependent, but someone who is suffering from the effects of abuse.
- e) **Don't guilt-trip the victim into remaining in the abuse.** It is not uncommon for biblical passages on headship, submission, and enduring suffering to be misinterpreted to influence victims to remain with an abusive spouse (see Appendix 4 – Domestic Abuse and the Bible).
- f) **Don't confront the abuser without a safety strategy.** Well-meaning attempts to reason with the abuser may place the survivor at greater risk as well as yourself.
- g) **Don't minimise risk.** The greatest time of danger for abuse survivors is often when they attempt to leave or just after they have left.
- h) **Do not put a survivor under pressure to involve the police (unless children or others are at risk).** If they decide they do not want to report abuse to the police, they should receive a response that respects their right to privacy. However, if you are concerned that they or someone else is at serious risk of harm

or at risk to life, explain that you must discuss this with your District Safeguarding Lead (DSL), though they can be kept anonymous.

- i) **DON'T do nothing.**

## J. DOMESTIC ABUSE AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

While Christians often display a reluctance to make recourse to agencies outside the church for support, it must be recognized that domestic abuse is a crime that may require intervention from law enforcement agencies and the courts systems. Biblical counsel urging fellow believers to avoid taking each other to court is sound in principle (1 Cor 6:1). However, in cases of abuse, perpetrators must forfeit the rights of a true believer (Matt 18:15-17).

Church membership is a privilege that demonstrates that an individual is committed to living in accordance with the beliefs of the Church. One such belief is the respectful treatment of others. Where it is proven that a member, regardless of office, is rejecting this belief through their ill treatment of others the matter should be referred to the local church board or Pastor for action. To bear the name 'Christian' is to profess that we seek to follow Jesus and as such local churches should ensure that through the programmes of the church, members are made aware of the Church's beliefs in this area. Victims deserve the protection that the legal system affords, and abusers should be subject to the penalties that the law provides. The goal of redemption for perpetrators should guide our dealings with them. However, this does not preclude accountability for their actions or suffering the consequences of their crimes (see 1 Corinthians 5:5).

Section 76 of the [Serious Crimes Act 2015](#) has made the successful prosecution and punishment of domestic abuse more achievable by changing the focus from individual incidences of violence to repeated and continuous behaviour towards another person that is controlling or coercive. In the UK, courts provide comprehensive provisions for responding to domestic violence. These cover matters dealt with in the criminal, civil and family courts. Advice about any of these matters should be without charge from solicitors, using public funding. Detailed information can be supplied by many of the agencies listed in the appendices.

### Adults at Risk?

Providing pastoral care to victims of abuse is far from an exact science. Risk assessment requires that the best judgement is exercised. Carers must balance the privacy of the victim against the threat to their safety. A statutory duty of care is owed to those who fall under the definition of an 'adult at risk'. The statutory guidance issued under the [Care Act 2014](#) states that adult safeguarding means "protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect". The Act defines an adult at risk as someone aged 18 or over who is, or may be, in need of community services due to age, illness or a mental or physical disability. They are people who are, or may be, unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation. Whether victims of domestic abuse fall under this definition is often a judgement call that must be made in assessing the risk they face and their capacity to protect themselves or seek help. As a general principle, any action should be taken with the consent of the victim. However, the most serious cases of abuse may necessitate unilateral action for their safety or the safety of children. Where children are considered to be at risk the Designated Safeguarding Officer takes the lead in addressing such concerns.

### Legal Protection through Criminal and Civil Proceedings

While the legal system can provide remedies for victims of domestic abuse, it is important to recognise that reporting domestic abuse within a relationship does not necessarily mean that the victim wishes to involve the law. In some instances, simply disclosing the matter to responsible church leaders may be sufficient bring about an end to abuse. In any event, those who provide support to victims should always be guided by what the victim wants, not necessarily what the carer thinks should happen. Proper assessment of the situation is necessary to determine the best course of action. This will depend on the nature of the abuse and how entrenched it has become.

## Criminal Proceedings

The first route a victim can use, is by making a complaint to the police, which could result in a criminal prosecution. Most cases can be categorised as an offence against the person and the police can make arrests for offences such as assault, battery, actual bodily harm, grievous bodily harm or one of a number of sexual offences. They can also make arrests for harassment under the [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#), which includes a stalking offence, (e.g. which could encompass behaviour such as watching or spying on a person; interfering with a person's possessions). A person does not have to be the victim of a physical assault in order to be subjected to harassment (or stalking). This legislation provides both civil and criminal remedies. These include non-harassment and restraining orders. Section 12 of the [Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004](#) amended the [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#), to extend the availability of restraining orders to all offences, and also to give the court the power to make a restraining order even when a person has been acquitted, where the court considers it necessary to do so to protect a person from harassment by the defendant. There is also the "revenge porn" offence contained in section 33 of the [Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015](#), which creates an offence of disclosing private sexual photographs and films with intent to cause distress, which could equally be viewed, in some cases, as a form of domestic abuse.

A further criminal offence was introduced in 2015 which closed the gap in the law around patterns of controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship (Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015). This offence criminalises patterns of coercive behaviour where they are perpetrated against a family member or between individuals who are or used to be in an intimate personal relationship. The offence carries a maximum sentence of 5 years' imprisonment, a fine, or both.

The behaviour, when viewed in isolation, may appear innocuous, but the cumulative effect on a victim may be significant, causing damage and distress. Although there is no statutory definition of controlling or coercive behaviour, the Government has issued statutory guidance under section 77 of the [Serious Crime Act 2015](#). This guidance contains the following cross-Government definitions of "controlling behaviour" and "coercive behaviour":

"Controlling behaviour is: A range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour." The Act stipulates that, "Coercive behaviour is: A continuing act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim."

The guidance also gives a non-exhaustive list of the types of behaviour that may be associated with coercion or control.<sup>18</sup> A person investigating offences with regard to controlling or coercive behaviour must have regard to this guidance.

## Civil Proceedings

A victim may pursue a claim for damages and/or other remedies through the civil courts. It is possible to pursue a civil claim where the conduct does not constitute a criminal offence or there is insufficient evidence to convict or where a person does not want to involve the police. The standard of proof in civil courts is lower than in criminal courts, (i.e. "balance of probabilities" rather than "beyond all reasonable doubt"). A civil claim for domestic abuse would usually take the form of an action for negligence, battery, or trespass to the person, depending on the circumstances of the case. Examples of remedies in the civil court are damages, injunctions, non-molestation orders and occupation orders under the [Family Law Act 1996](#) (as amended by Part 1 of the [Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004](#)).

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<sup>18</sup> [Controlling or coercive behaviour: statutory guidance and framework](#)

## Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme

Since March 2014 there has been the [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme](#) (colloquially known as “Clare’s law”), which contains two specific rights. That is a “right to ask”, which allows an individual to ask police to check whether a new or existing partner has a violent past and a “right to know”, which enables an agency (e.g. a statutory agency or a charity) or an individual to ask the police to release information concerning an individual being at risk of domestic violence. The police will consider whether to release the information to the individual involved or to the person that is best placed to protect that individual.

Anyone can apply for a disclosure by visiting their local police station or calling 101. The police will ask for an overview of your concerns and take your contact details. You may be invited to a face to face discussion where you will require two forms of ID. The police will undertake a risk assessment and will make a disclosure to the person affected if they believe that abuse is likely. They will then help any potential victim to put together a safety plan. You may not hear the outcome of your request if the police do not deem this to be necessary.

Government guidance in relation to domestic violence and abuse can be found on the website listed below, in particular there is guidance on the [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme](#), as well as further information about how to report domestic abuse and where to get help: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-violence-and-abuse>

## Domestic Violence Notices and Orders

The initial period of response to domestic abuse is critical. [Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders](#) (DVPN and DVPO) are part of a scheme introduced in March 2014 that provides protection to victims in the immediate aftermath of domestic violence. The scheme comprises an initial temporary notice (the DVPN), authorised by a senior police officer and issued to the perpetrator by the police, followed by a DVPO that can last from 14 to 28 days, imposed at the magistrates’ court. Under the DVPO scheme, the police and magistrates can, in the immediate aftermath of a domestic violence incident, ban the alleged perpetrator from the family home or victim’s residence or to have any contact with the victim for up to 28 days. This is important as, often due to lack of evidence or the victim’s reluctance to pursue a prosecution, the perpetrator may not be charged and therefore cannot be bailed with any conditions to stay away. DVPOs are designed to help victims who may otherwise have had to flee their home, giving them time to access support and consider their options.

## Restraining Orders

Restraining orders can be made on conviction or acquittal for any criminal offence. These orders are intended to be preventative and protective. The guiding principle is that there must be a need for the order to protect a person or persons. The test to be applied by the court before making an order is whether an order is necessary to protect the persons named in it from harassment or conduct that will put them in fear of violence. This necessitates an evaluation by the court of the evidence before it. It will require the court to determine whether there is sufficient evidence in front of it to enable it to form a view that an order is necessary. Restraining orders are civil behaviour orders and therefore the standard of proof is a civil one.

## Other Civil Court Orders

There are also two main Orders which the Courts can make. These are called the [Non-Molestation Order](#) and an [Occupation Order](#). Secular legal aid may be available for an application for a Non-Molestation order and/or Occupation Order. This is means and merit tested. An Occupation Order controls who can live in a property. It can also restrict the respondent from entering a certain area. If you do not feel safe living with the respondent and you have left because of violence or intimidation and want to return without the respondent being there, the order you would apply for is an Occupation Order. A Non-Molestation Order prevents the respondent from using or threatening violence against you (and if applicable your child/children) or intimidating, harassing or pestering you. This is to ensure the health, safety and well-being of yourself (and if applicable your child/children). A breach of a Non-Molestation Order is an arrestable offence and now carries a maximum sentence of 5 years imprisonment. A breach of an Occupation Order is not a criminal offence but will be regarded as “contempt of court” in a civil court. That said, a power of arrest can be attached to an Occupation Order, which means that an individual can be arrested if the Occupation Order is breached.

## The Probation Service

Where individuals have been convicted of domestic abuse, the Probation Service is the lead statutory agency responsible for the assessment and supervision of offenders in the community is committed to working towards safer communities and fewer victims through offender rehabilitation. The focus of Probation Service interventions with domestic abuse perpetrators is on risk management and the safety of victims, present and future. This strategy sets out four key goals:

- The assessment and supervision of perpetrators of domestic violence
- Liaison and collaboration in the delivery of perpetrator programmes
- Supporting victims of domestic violence
- Awareness – raising on domestic violence issues

The Probation Service runs an accredited program for convicted perpetrators called [Building Better Relationships](#). These are mandated through community orders or as part of the perpetrators licence condition if they received a prison sentence. In high-risk cases female victims of abuse are assigned a Women Safety Worker (WSW) while the perpetrator completes the programme.

## K. MENTAL HEALTH AND DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic abuse can have an enormous effect on mental health. According to [Mental Health Foundation](#), domestic violence has an estimated overall cost to mental healthcare of £176 million. Research suggests that women experiencing domestic abuse are more likely to experience a mental health problem, while women with mental health problems are more likely to be domestically abused, with 30-60% of women with a mental health problem having experienced domestic violence.

It is now well accepted that abuse (both in childhood and in adult life) is often a significant factor in the development of depression, anxiety and other mental health disorders, and may lead to sleep disturbances, self-harm, suicide and attempted suicide, eating disorders and substance misuse. Victims of abuse who suffer with a mental health disorder, are particularly vulnerable and are likely to find it even harder to report domestic violence than other victims. This is compounded by a sense of shame because of the stigma attached in society to having mental health diagnosis of any kind, which may make victims feel even more powerless.

It is important that support for victims of abuse who have mental health issues are assisted with access to counselling support services. (See [Appendices](#) for organisations that provide counselling support)

Mental health issues are also a factor in the perpetration of domestic abuse. However, while mental health issues may reduce inhibitions that lead to abusive behaviour, research indicates that abusers are no more likely to be mentally ill than others.

## L. FOLLOW UP AND RECORD KEEPING

[Appendices 6 and 7](#) cover issues of confidentiality and data protection. Summary guidance is as follows:

- a) Do check if it is safe to contact the abuse survivor at home before doing so. Ask them what their preferred means of contact is and confirm that this is safe.
- b) Do keep information confidential and as a general rule only share with informed consent where appropriate and if possible, 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, such as where the safety of the victim or any other person may be at risk. Always keep a record of your decision and the reasons why you decided to share (or not). If in doubt, seek advice.

- c) 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 proceedings.
- d) Do review the safety and risk issues in relation to the victim and the perpetrator if they are in the same Church. There may need to be a risk assessment and 'safeguarding agreement' put in place to protect the vulnerable.
- e) Survivor 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 survivor wishes to discuss their safety with you. It is essential that you seek advice before entering into detailed safety planning discussions. This planning would normally be guided by a safety planning format (see Appendix 8) 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. Preferably, safety planning should be carried out with someone with experience and training in this area.
- f) **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 other members of a congregation who might inadvertently pass information on to the perpetrator.
- g) When victims are leaving a controlling abuser, 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.

## M. SAFETY OF CHURCH WORKERS

Those who seek to provide intervention in cases of domestic abuse must not only be concerned for the safety of the victim but also for themselves. Working for the interests of the victim will often be perceived by the abuser as the Church working against them with the possibility that animosity may be directed toward those providing assistance. Leaders and workers must be aware that the greatest risk for the victims of domestic abuse is when the victim attempts to leave or immediately after separation).

- a) **Plan ahead.** Safety is the first priority for the survivor and any children. Plan ahead when possible, so that workers or colleagues are not placed in a dangerous situation and take sensible precautions to avoid putting yourself in danger.
- b) **Don't challenge directly.** It is not safe to 'check the story' with the perpetrator, or to challenge in any direct way. To do so places the survivor, children and yourself at serious risk. If it is absolutely necessary to raise the issue with the perpetrator, you should plan carefully and usually obtain professional advice before doing so. [See Appendix 9 – Personal Safety for Pastoral Carers.](#)
- c) **Observe best practice in pastoral care.** Those who meet with victims or abusers need to be aware of the nature of, and constraints of pastoral relationships. In considering safety and good practice in providing pastoral care there should always be more than one person on the premises during planned meetings.
- d) **Don't meet in isolation.** Quiet and confidential places should be available for listening, but ideally someone else should also be aware of where and when a meeting is taking place. This protection is for both listener and the one seeking help.
- e) **Know your limitations.** It is vital that those providing pastoral care be aware of their limitations and know when they need to refer to those who have the competencies they do not possess. Recognise the work of other agencies and work with them. Be able to signpost someone to services that can help. Offer to accompany them to an appointment if that would help. In certain instances, referral is mandatory (e.g. awareness of child abuse, elder abuse or other safety issues or criminal actions). See [Appendix 7 – When to Refer.](#)

- f) **Maintain professional boundaries.** It is vital that while providing pastoral care, church workers maintain professional boundaries to avoid the danger of counter-transference. It is not unusual for victims of abuse who have endured harsh treatment at the hands of an abuser, to form an emotional bond to those who demonstrate care and compassion. Survivors need consistent support. However, the goal of support is empowerment not dependence.
- g) **Share the load.** One church or one pastoral carer, should not try to support both partners in one fellowship. Trying to support both partners makes the church unsafe for the survivor and may be seen to condone the behaviour of the abuser. It should never be the survivor who has to leave the church unless this is the only safe option.

### Care for the Carers

Those who provide support to victims of abuse must also safeguard their own psychological wellbeing as well as their physical safety. Carers may often be exposed to disturbing accounts of abuse i.e. rape, battering, cruelty, witness scars and bruises etc, which can be traumatising. The Church has a duty of care not only to victims and perpetrators, but also to carers, and must be intentional about providing support for the supporters where it is required.

## N. PASTORAL SUPPORT FOR PERPETRATORS

Pastoral carers will often struggle with the tension between supporting the victim of domestic violence and their responsibility toward the abuser. It is vital that the victim does not get the impression that the minister is an ally of the abuser. Pastoral workers must make clear that their role towards the offender is one of accountability in the first instance.

Congregations caught up in the situation may need help. Holding the tension between those who are “on the side of” one partner or the other can be very difficult. This is where the support of wider the church or outside agencies can be invaluable. It is important to remember that abused and abuser cannot both be supported in the same church community nor can they be supported pastorally by the same person.

Challenging perpetrators to take responsibility for their attitudes and actions is part of demonstrating that the church considers domestic abuse unacceptable. However, working with perpetrators is extraordinarily difficult work, **which ministers, and other church workers are not trained to do.** Offering support and protection involves recognising the need for work with perpetrators to be undertaken by someone with specialist skills, and where pastoral support from the church and specialist agencies like [The Domestic Violence Intervention Project \(DVIP\)](#) and [Respect](#) can be offered alongside.

### 1. DOs and DON'Ts with a Perpetrator of Abuse

#### DO:

- a) **Do hold the perpetrator accountable for their actions.** It should be made clear that it is expected that individuals who are known to be perpetrators will accept whatever discipline the church has agreed. It may be appropriate to draw up a contract between the church and the perpetrator, which outlines any activities, roles or behaviour which are proscribed and any agreed activities. For example, the perpetrator may be required to worship at a different church, not attending particular groups, not taking leadership roles etc. This should be seen as part of the acceptance of the need for repentance and the desire to lead a new life in a different way. The contract will be known only to the minister, those who are providing support, and any essential officers of the church.
- b) **Do appreciate that while perpetrators can change, the vast majority do not.** Desire to see the best in people must not cloud realistic expectations and perceptions. One body of research indicates that around 90% of perpetrators will not avail themselves of the help needed to change.

- c) **Do accept that perpetrators require specialist help from trained professionals.** Abusers tend to be masters of manipulation who specialise in deception. Even clinical counsellors without specific training in working with abusers may be limited in their ability to influence change. Research indicates that the most effective form of intervention is perpetrator support groups. Those who are providing support should feel able to work alongside agencies or services working with the individual on a validated, accredited intervention programme.
- d) **Do be realistic about the levels of support that can be offered to perpetrators.** There are not many intervention programmes working with perpetrators, and those run by the probation service work mainly with men who have been convicted. Communities will need to be realistic about the level of support which can safely and effectively be offered to perpetrators who do not have external support.
- e) **Do assess the person abusing for suicide ideation or threats of homicide.** If you are concerned that there is a serious danger that the individual might harm themselves, call the police or social services. Warn the victim if specific threats are made towards them.
- f) **Do realise that change is a long-term process.** In the Christian context, the ultimate goal of working with abusers is not just the cessation of abuse, but the heart transformation of the abuser. Conversion and change are not events, but are processes that require Divine power, time, and consistent support over the long-haul. The responsibility for overseeing change in the abuser should never rest on the shoulders of one individual.
- g) **Do practice self-care by accessing some form of personal supervision.** Those who are providing support will need their own ongoing support, and opportunity to ensure they remain comfortable with that role, and the issues which may be raised.
- h) **Do pray with them.** Ask God to help them stop their abuse, repent and find a new way. Do assure them of your support in this endeavour either directly or through the support of others.

#### **DON'T:**

- a) **Don't meet with them alone.** Meet in a public place or in the church with several other people around (not necessarily in the same room, but in close proximity). If you are going to confront the abuser, take a colleague with you ([Appendix 9 – Personal Safety for Pastoral Carers](#)).
- b) **Don't collude with, excuse or minimize their behaviour.** Perpetrators will latch on to any excuse to justify their behaviour or minimise the consequences of their actions. Don't allow religion to be used as an excuse for their behaviour. Don't be taken in by the abuser's lies or manipulation.
- c) **Don't be taken in by a "conversion" experience.** Don't confuse their remorse with true repentance. If it is genuine, it will be a tremendous resource as the abuser proceeds with accountability. If it is false, it is only another way to manipulate you and the system/church and maintain control of the process to avoid accountability.
- d) **Don't approach the abusive person or let them know that you know about the violence unless** a) you have the victim's permission, b) s/he is aware that you plan to talk to the abuser and c) you are certain that the abused person is safely separated from the abuser.
- e) **Don't try to investigate or offer/provide treatment.** Leave treatment to those professionally trained.
- f) **Don't recommend courses in anger management or conflict resolution.** Anger is not the cause of abuse, it is a tactic that the abuser uses to maintain power and control. Conflict resolution is for parties who have an equal investment in a relationship and suggests that both parties are culpable. Domestic abuse, by definition, is an abuse of power. Perpetrators need individual work to address their value systems and the decision making.

- g) **Don't provide a character witness in any proceedings.** Avoid being involved in any processes which may seem as if the Church supports their position. Do not advocate for the perpetrator to avoid the legal consequences of their violence.

## APPENDICES

### National References and Resources

#### NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

- Local children or adult services and NHS Health Promotion Service (via local/online directories).
- [Thirtyone:eight](#) - ☎ 0303 003 11 11
- [NSPCC](#) - Weston House, 42 Curtain Rd, London, EC2A 3NH. - ☎ 0207 825 2500
- [Children 1st](#) - Scotland's National Children's Charity - ☎ 0131 446 2300
- [Child Exploitation and Online Protection](#) – National Crime Agency reporting service

These organisations may also be approached for training or information.

#### HELPLINES

- [Thirtyone:eight](#) - ☎ 0303 003 11 11
- [ChildLine](#) - ☎ 0800 1111 (also handles adult calls)
- [NSPCC](#) - Child Protection Helpline: ☎ 0808 800 500
- [Children 1st](#) – Scotland's National Children's Charity - Helpline: ☎ 08000 28 22 33
- [Samaritans](#) - ☎ 116 123
- [Alzheimer's Society](#) - ☎ 0300 222 11 22 (National Dementia Helpline)
- [National Domestic Violence Helpline](#) - ☎ 0808 2000 247
- [National Centre for Domestic Violence](#) - ☎ 0800 970 2070
- [Women's Aid and Refuge](#)
  - FREEPHONE ENGLAND NATIONAL 24HR HELPLINE ☎ 0808 2000 247
  - SCOTLAND 24HR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HELPLINE ☎ 0800 0271 234
  - WALES 24HR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HELPLINE ☎ 0808 8010 800
- [Rape Crisis \(England & Wales\)](#) - ☎ 0808 802 9999
- [Respect Phoneline](#) - ☎ 0808 8024040
- [Respect - Men's Advice Line](#) - ☎ 0808 801 0327
- [Mankind Initiative](#) - ☎ 01823 334 244

#### ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE AND USEFUL WEBSITES

- [Safeguarding Older People from Abuse and Neglect. Factsheet 78, May 2015](#)
- [NSPCC](#) publishes a series of separate information leaflets for parents, children and teenagers.
- [Thirtyone:eight](#) supplies books, DVDs and material to use with children. Send for their resource list at the above address enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope.
- [Kidscape](#) – Help with Bullying - 82 Brook Street, London W1Y 1YG, supplies materials for parents to use with children, and kits for use, particularly in schools.
- [Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Northern Ireland](#)
- [Scottish Government](#) website
- [Department for Education](#) – Responsible for education and children's services in England – has some useful links to safeguarding documents to guide professionals.
- HSE – Republic of Ireland – [Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults](#)

## CRIMINAL RECORDS DISCLOSURE CHECKS

- England and Wales: [Disclosure and Barring Service](#) - Guidance for Employers
- Northern Ireland: Checks are carried out by [AccessNI](#)
- Republic of Ireland: [National Vetting Bureau](#)
- Scotland: The [Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme](#) (PVG Scheme)

## NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

- [Action for Children](#) Helping children across the UK to grow up safe and happy. For campaigns and articles, enter the search term 'Domestic Abuse'.
- [Hourglass](#): Safer Aging, Stopping Abuse. Elder Abuse Response Helpline: ☎0808 808 8141
- [Alzheimer's Society](#) ☎0300 222 11 22 (National Dementia Helpline)
- [Age UK](#)
- [Action on Disability](#) ☎020 7385 2098 / 7381 2042
- [Citizen's Advice](#) - contact your local branch
- [MENCAP](#) – advice for those with learning disabilities ☎0808 808 1111
- [MIND](#) – The National Association for Mental Health ☎0300 123 3393 or text 86463
- [RNIB](#) – The Royal National Institute for the Blind ☎0303 123 9999
- [Women's Aid](#) - Provides services for women and children who have been affected by the experience of domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse. ☎0808 2000 247
- [Refuge](#) - Refuge is the national charity which provides a wide range of specialist domestic violence services to women and children experiencing domestic violence. ☎0808 2000 247
- [Rape Crisis](#) (England & Wales) - Rape Crisis Centres offer a range of services for women and girls who have been raped or experienced another form of sexual violence. ☎0808 802 9999
- [Scope](#) - the main national organization for those with cerebral palsy ☎0808 800 333
- [Livability](#) (formerly The Shaftesbury Society) ☎020 7452 2000
- [Through the Roof](#) - Christian body who help to improve access of disabled people to the Church ☎01372 74995
- [Christian Survivors of Sexual Abuse](#) - Support and self-help for survivors *Website*.
- [MACSAS](#) - Support and networking for survivors of sexual abuse by those in ministry ☎08088 01 03 40
- [NAPAC](#) - National Association for People Abused in Childhood ☎0808 801 0331
- [RESPOND](#) - For survivors or abusers with learning difficulties ☎0808 808 0700
- [Survivors UK](#) - Support for male survivors ☎0203 598 3898
- [Victim Support](#) – an independent charity that helps people affected by crime or traumatic events get the support they need.
- [National Domestic Violence Helpline](#) (Refuge) - The Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge ☎0808 2000 247
- [National Centre for Domestic Violence](#) - The National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV) provides a free, fast emergency injunction service to survivors of domestic violence. 24-hour helpline: ☎0800 970 2070

- [Men's Advice Line \(Respect\)](#) - A confidential helpline for men experiencing domestic violence from a partner or ex-partner (or from other family members). ☎0808 801 0327 (Monday - Friday 9am-5pm)
- [Mankind Initiative](#) - Support for male victims of domestic abuse and domestic violence ☎01823 334 244 (weekdays 10am to 4pm)
- [Respect](#) - The Respect phone line is a confidential helpline offering advice, information and support to help you stop being violent and abusive to your partner. ☎0808 802 4040
- [Samaritans](#) - A 24-hour helpline for any person in emotional distress ☎116 123
- [SafeLives](#) - SafeLives is a national charity supporting a strong multi-agency response to domestic abuse. It provides practical help to support professionals and organisations working with domestic abuse victims, with the aim of protecting the highest risk victims and their children – those at risk of murder or serious harm. SafeLives does not provide direct support or advice to victims of domestic violence. However, if you are experiencing domestic abuse or are supporting someone who is in that situation, immediate help is available via the National Domestic Violence Helpline. ☎0117 403 3220
- [The National Careline](#) – Action on Elder Abuse ☎0800 0699 784
- [The Survivors Trust](#) - Umbrella agency for specialist rape and sexual abuse services in the UK. Helpline: ☎08088 010818
- [Survivors UK](#) - Support for men experiencing rape and sexual abuse, and for their friends and family.
- [Stop it Now](#) - Child protection charity, working to prevent child sexual abuse
- [Rights of Women](#) - Provides women with free, confidential legal advice by specialist women solicitors and barristers.
- [Domestic Violence Intervention Project \(DVIP\)](#) - Helps to make women and children safer. With services across London, they work to stop domestic violence and to reduce the harm it causes to women, children and families. ☎ 020 7633 918
- [White Ribbon](#) - Men working to end violence against women.

## GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

- [Home Office](#) - Information regarding domestic violence and abuse, including links to further material on the new definition of domestic abuse; coercive and controlling behaviour; domestic violence disclosure scheme; domestic violence protection notices and orders; Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR); Independent domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs) and MARACs.
- [The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme \(DVDS\)](#) - Often called 'Clare's Law' after the landmark case that led to it. This gives any member of the public the right to ask the police if their partner may pose a risk to them. Under Clare's Law, a member of the public can also make enquiries into the partner of a close friend or family member.

## SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES

- [Cornerstone Counselling Services](#) SEC Listening Line ☎ 0330 133 2495 or for appointments ☎ 020 7423 8050
- [Enditnow](#) - Adventists Say No to Violence - is a global initiative to raise awareness and advocate for the end of violence around the world. It aims to mobilize Seventh-day Adventists around the world and invites other community groups to join in to resolve this worldwide issue.
- [General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists](#) Official Statement on Family Violence

NB – SDA SUPPORT AND INTERVENTIONS SHOULD ALWAYS OPERATE ALONGSIDE COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES, NOT AS AN ALTERNATIVE

## CHRISTIAN RESOURCES

- [Restored](#) - Restored is an international Christian alliance working to end violence against women and to transform relationships.
- [RAVE](#) - RAVE is an initiative that seeks to bring knowledge and social action together to assist families of faith impacted by abuse.
- [Hidden Hurt](#) - Hidden Hurt is designed to help understand the dynamics of relationships where abuse is taking place, the different forms abuse can take, its effect on both direct victims (i.e. person being abused) and indirect victims (i.e. children living in a house where abuse occurs), specific issues facing the Christian abuse victim, and helpful links and telephone numbers inside the UK.
- [Faith Trust Institute](#) - A US-based multi-faith organization working to end sexual and domestic violence.
- [Eve](#) - run a family refuge in Northamptonshire and provide training on domestic abuse prevention and response

## ORGANISATIONS PROVIDING TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR WORKERS

- [Women's Aid](#) - Provides services for women and children who have been affected by the experience of domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse. ☎0808 2000 247
- [Mankind Initiative](#) - Support for male victims of domestic abuse and domestic violence ☎ 01823 334 244 (weekdays 10am to 4pm)
- [Refuge](#) - Refuge is the national charity which provides a wide range of specialist domestic violence services to women and children experiencing domestic violence. ☎0808 2000 247
- [Domestic Violence Intervention Project \(DVIP\)](#) - provide training programmes and expert support for practice development. ☎ 020 7633 918
- [Respect](#) - Respect is the UK's principle training organisation for frontline work with perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse, male victims and young people using violence. Training courses provide professionals with the skills and knowledge that they need to work safely and effectively in the domestic violence sector.

## AGENCIES WORKING WITH MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS

- [AFRUCA](#) – Safeguarding Children - ☎0844 660 8607
- [CIAC Chinese Information and Advice Centre](#) - ☎0845 313 1868 ex 211
- [Imkaan](#) - UK-based, umbrella women's organisation dedicated to addressing violence against Black and Minoritised women and girls
- [Kiran Project](#) – Supporting Asian Women - ☎020 8558 1986
- [LAWRS](#) (Latin American Women's Rights Service) - ☎020 7336 0888
- [Southall Black Sisters](#) - For Asian, African and African-Caribbean women - ☎020 8571 9595 Mon – Fri 10am – 5pm Closed Wed
- [Domestic Violence Intervention Project \(DVIP\)](#) - Helps to make women and children safer. With services across London, they work to stop domestic violence and to reduce the harm it causes to women, children and families. ☎ 020 7633 918

## RESOURCES CONCERNING HONOUR-BASED VIOLENCE

- [Karma Nirvana](#) supports those who suffer or are at risk of honour-based abuse or forced marriage. ☎0800 5999 247 (9am – 9pm Weekdays & 10am – 4pm Weekends)
- [Forced Marriage Unit](#) - The Government's Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) is dedicated both to preventing British nationals being forced into marriage overseas and to assisting anyone in the UK faced with the prospect of being forced into a marriage. If you are worried that you might be forced into a marriage or are worried about someone else who may be you should contact FMU on ☎020 7008 0151 (9am – 5pm) or 0207 008 1500 (if outside the office hours (ask for the Global Response Centre)

## HELP AND SERVICES SPECIFIC TO WALES

- [Dyn Wales/Dyn Cymru](#) - Support and advice for men experiencing domestic abuse (weekdays 9am–5pm). Helpline: ☎ 0808 801 0321
- [Live Fear Free Helpline](#) - Providing help and advice about violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. ☎ 0808 801 0800
- [Safer Wales \(Women's Safety Unit\)](#) - Services in Cardiff for women who are pregnant or have children 0-4 years old, who are experiencing or are at risk of domestic abuse. Providing an independent Domestic Violence Advisor to work with high-risk victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence. ☎ 029 2022 0033
- Welsh Women's Aid Helpline - ☎ 0808 80 10 800
- Working in Wales to end domestic abuse and all forms of violence against women.

#### HELP AND SERVICES SPECIFIC TO SCOTLAND

- [Abused Men in Scotland](#) Helpline - ☎ 03300 949 395
- [Rape Crisis Scotland](#) Helpline - ☎ 08088 01 03 02
- [Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline](#) - ☎ 0800 027 1234
- [Scottish Women's Aid](#) –
- [Shakti Women's Aid](#) - Help for black and minority ethnic women, children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse. ☎ 0101 475 2399
- [Victim Support Scotland](#) - Free and confidential information and support to people who are victims of crime or attending a court in the region - ☎ 0800 160 1985

#### HELP AND SERVICES SPECIFIC TO IRELAND

- [Men's Advisory Project](#) - Counselling services for men experiencing domestic abuse. ☎ (028) 9024 1929
- [Victim Support NI](#) - Free and confidential information and support to people who are victims of crime or attending a court in the region. ☎ (028) 9024 3133
- [Domestic and Sexual Abuse](#) - 24-hour helpline for victims of domestic and sexual abuse. ☎ 0808 802 1414

#### RECOMMENDED READING

##### Christian Books:

- Battered into Submission: The Tragedy of Wife Abuse in the Christian Home – James & Phyllis Alsdurf
- Not Under Bondage: Biblical Divorce for Abuse, Adultery & Desertion – Barbara Roberts
- A Cry for Justice: How the Evil of Domestic Abuse Hides Out in Your Church – Jeff Crippen
- Unholy Charade: Unmasking the Domestic Abuser in the Church – Jeff Crippen
- The Heart of Domestic Abuse: Gospel Solutions for Men Who Use Control and Violence in the Home – Chris Moles
- Mending the Soul: Understanding and Healing Abuse – Stephen Tracey
- Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know – Al Miles
- Dating Violence in Teen Dating Relationships – Al Miles
- Keeping the Faith: Guidance for Christian Women Facing Abuse – Marie M. Fortune
- Beyond Boundaries: Learning to Trust Again in Relationships – John Townsend
- Voices from Violence: A Woman's Journey to Self-Healing – Calvin Wilson

##### Non-Christian Books:

- When Dad Hits Mom Helping Your Children Heal the Wounds of Witnessing Abuse – Lundy Bancroft

- Why Does He Do That: Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men – Lundy Bancroft
- When Men Batter: New Insights into Abusive Relationships – Neil Jacobson & John Gottman
- Violent No More: Helping Men End Domestic Violence – Michael Paymar
- How He Gets Into Her Head: The Mind of the Male Intimate Abuser – Don Hennessy
- Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of Violence – From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror - Judith Herman
- Invisible Chains: Overcoming Coercive Control in Your Intimate Relationship
- Helping Her Get Free: A Guide for Families and Friends of Abused Women – Susan Brewster
- It's My Life Now: Starting Over After an Abusive Relationship – Meg Kennedy Dugan & Roger R. Hock
- When Love Goes Wrong: What to Do When You Can't Do Anything Right – Ann Jones & Susan Schechter
- Domestic Violence Safety Plan: A Comprehensive Plan that Will Keep You Safer Whether You Stay or Leave – Kellie Jo Holly
- Getting Free: You Can End Abuse and Take Back Your Life – Ginny NiCarthy

## Appendix 1: Domestic Abuse and the Bible

### God's Purpose for Marriage

The perpetration of domestic abuse is a most heinous crime in any context, but it is particularly so when it occurs within the Church in Christian homes. Abuse within marriage and the family fundamentally violates the purpose for which they were instituted. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God with the intention that they would reflect His image not only to one another, but to their posterity. The primary purpose of marriage and family is to transmit God's values from generation to generation so that He would remain known (see John 17:3). The reason why domestic abuse is such a heinous sin is that it not only warps individuals' concept of themselves, but it profoundly distorts the image of God for both victims and perpetrators.

### The Great Danger of Emotional & Psychological abuse in Religious Communities

Abuse manifests itself in many ways, but it cuts particularly deep wounds in the form of spiritual abuse. Abuse of any type occurs when someone has power over another and uses that power to harm. Emotional & psychological abuse happens when a person with spiritual authority uses that authority to coerce, control or exploit another. In this context, the Bible itself can become an effective weapon in the hands of an abuser. History is replete with the misuse of the Scripture to justify evil. This was true of the Pharisees in Jesus' day. It was true of those who enslaved African men, women and children. It was true of those who sought to deny women suffrage, and it is true of domestic abusers who distort biblical passages to justify their abuse of power. Abuse in Christian communities involves using the principles of evil in the name of Christ. C S Lewis said it well when he penned "Of all bad men, religious bad men are the worst" (Reflections on the Psalms, 31-32).

The seriousness of this form of abuse is indicated by the fact that Jesus spent more time challenging spiritual abuse than any other social problem of His day. He berated the leaders of the church stating, "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in (Matthew 23:13). Jesus indicates here that one of the primary problems with spiritual abuse is that it can lead to people rejecting the church and more importantly, rejecting God. Abusers who claim to be Christians present a false view of God and a false way of serving Him.

### The Misapplication of the Bible

The Bible has been wielded by abusers to teach that men are superior to women (Gen 1&2); men are more intelligent (1 Tim 2:8-15); the woman's place is in the home (Titus 2:3-5); wives must be subservient (Eph 5:22-33); husband know best (1 Cor 14:33-36); and wives have no right to refuse sex (1 Cor 7:5). While theologians have and will continue to debate the real meaning and application of these passages, any interpretation of God's Word must be consistent with His character of love, grace and justice.

Those who assert that wives should submit to their husbands tend not to emphasise the command to, "love your wives, and do not be harsh with them" (Colossians 3:19). It is one thing to assert that the husband is the head of the wife, and that she should subject to him in all things, but the context of the passage is that husbands should "love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her . . . so husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies" (Ephesians 5:25-31). The standard by which husbands are to treat their wives, is the self-sacrificing love of Jesus. Husbands who abuse their wives forfeit the privilege of headship in marriage. Ellen White comments that, "Neither the husband nor the wife should attempt to exercise over the other an arbitrary control . . . Entire submission is to be made only to the Lord Jesus Christ . . . When husbands require the complete subjection of their wives . . . they place their wives in a position contrary to the scripture" (The Adventist Home, 118-119). However we interpret the concept of biblical headship and submission, it cannot include force, coercion, intimidation, and violence.

Church leaders may also be guilty of unwitting complicity with abusers by misapplying the biblical theology of suffering. 1 Peter admonishes believers to be submissive to abusive authority (2:18-20), to follow Christ's example of quiet suffering (2:21-22), and to share joyfully in Christ's suffering (4:13). It is therefore, not uncommon for survivors of abuse to be told that their suffering is God's will for their lives and if they just submit and endure, then God will reward their faith. Such rationale is both erroneous and dangerous in the context of domestic abuse. It gives licence to perpetrators to abuse their spouses and disempowers the sufferer from acting in their own best interest. There is nothing redemptive in suffering in and of itself. There is nothing virtuous or meritorious in affliction if you can legitimately escape it. It is appropriate to flee persecution (Matt 10:23). Jesus Himself avoided unnecessary persecution (Luke 4:29-30; John 11:53). Many survivors feel that their marriage vow obligates them to endure every physical and emotional violation of their humanity. However, they have the right to protect themselves from harm and the husband who abandons Christ-like headship also forfeits the right to

covenant privilege. Every healthy relationship, including marriage, requires healthy boundaries with unsafe people.

### Forgiveness

Forgiveness, repentance and new life in Christ are central to the gospel, but some simplistic understandings, or misunderstandings, of forgiveness have prompted actions and statements that have caused further harm and damage to those who have experienced abuse. For example, the idea that forgiveness involves forgetting persists, but a new start does not mean that the past is forgotten and there are no consequences. Indeed, forgiveness may well mean that offenders have a greater sense of obligation than before, as they are encouraged to recognise and take responsibility for the damage, profound harm and trauma that resulted from their actions. Repentance does not mean that someone is wholly reformed, previous patterns of behaviour have been left behind, or there is no risk of reoffending. Through God's grace there is the possibility of change for all, but for trust to be re-established, change has to be demonstrated in the context of a community that exercises discipline and demands accountability. Safeguarding processes are part of this.

Abusers do violence to the Bible in order to do violence against their spouse. Our response to the challenge of domestic abuse can only be as effective of our understanding of the problem and the remedies we provide for survivors of abuse can only be as effective as the theology that underpins them. It is the responsibility of the church to recover the true meaning of the Bible. Its role is to exemplify the ministry of Jesus who declared, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18). God is on the side of the oppressed and we should be too, to "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; for the rights of all who are destitute" (Proverbs 31:8).

## Appendix 2: General Conference Statement on Abuse and Family Violence

Seventh-day Adventists affirm the dignity and worth of each human being and decry all forms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and family violence.

We recognize the global extent of this problem and the serious, long-term effects upon the lives of all involved. We believe that Christians must respond to abuse and family violence both within the church and in the community. We take seriously reports of abuse and violence and have highlighted these issues for discussion at this international assembly. We believe that to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and potentially extend such behaviour.

We accept our responsibility to cooperate with other professional services, to listen and care for those suffering from abuse and family violence, to highlight the injustices, and to speak out in defence of victims. We will help persons in need to identify and access the range of available professional services.

When changed attitudes and behaviour open possibilities for forgiveness and new beginnings, we will provide a ministry of reconciliation. We will assist families in grief over relationships that cannot be restored. We will address the spiritual questions confronting abused persons, seeking to understand the origins of abuse and family violence and developing better ways of preventing the recurring cycle.

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*This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and was released by the Office of the President, Robert S. Folkenberg, at the General Conference session in Utrecht, the Netherlands, June 29-July 8, 1995.*

## Appendix 3: The Impact of Witnessing Domestic Abuse on Children

### Witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse

Domestic abuse can have a devastating impact on the victims and their families, with children and young people at risk of serious harm to both their emotional and physical health. Since the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children that have been exposed to domestic abuse are now recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right, rather than just witnesses.

### How are children affected by domestic abuse?

Children who witness domestic abuse are at risk of both short and long-term physical and mental health problems. Every child will be affected differently to the trauma of domestic abuse.

### Short-term effects of domestic abuse:

For **young children** this can include:

- bed-wetting
- increased sensitivity and crying
- difficulty sleeping or falling asleep
- separation anxiety

For **school aged children** this can include:

- a loss of drive to participate in activities and school
- lower grades in school
- feeling guilty and to blame for the abuse happening to them
- getting into trouble more often
- physical signs such as headaches and stomach aches

For **teenagers** this can include:

- acting out in negative ways such as missing school or fighting with family members
- having low self-esteem
- finding it difficult to make friends
- engaging in risky behaviours such as using alcohol and other drugs

### Long-term effects of domestic abuse:

- mental health problems, such as becoming anxious or depressed. Low mental health can also lead to big impacts on physical health, including self-harm or developing an eating disorder
- having a lowered sense of self-worth
- using alcohol and other drugs as unhealthy coping mechanisms
- repeating behaviours seen in their domestic setting

### How to recognise the signs and indicators of a child experiencing domestic abuse at home

It can be difficult to know if domestic abuse is happening. Even if they are not physically harmed, children may experience emotional and psychological damage as a result of witnessing domestic abuse.

Signs and indicators that a child has witnessed domestic abuse can include:

- withdrawn or detached behaviour
- ambivalent feelings towards both the abuser and the non-abusing parent
- constant or frequent sickness
- frustration or aggression
- bullying peers

- problems in school or with learning
- [anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts](#)
- [drug or alcohol use](#)
- easily startled or seem on edge
- fear of leaving the home
- bed-wetting or increased soiling
- nightmares or insomnia
- withdrawal or struggles with separation
- difficulty identifying feelings or communicating needs
- difficulty developing positive peer relationships

### **What should I do if I notice signs of domestic abuse or I'm worried about a child?**

If you are concerned that a child may be at imminent risk of domestic abuse, always call **999** immediately.

If you are worried that a child may be being affected by domestic abuse, it is important that you share that concern. Consult with your Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), pastor or responsible person. The information you have may help professionals to build a picture about what might be happening to a child and help them.

### **What to do if a child reveals abuse**

If a child speaks to you about domestic abuse it is important that you:

- provide a safe space for the young person to share
- let them know they've done the right thing telling you
- tell them it's not their fault
- listen to them and understand their needs
- do not push the child for answers, allow them to share as much as they are comfortable with
- do not confront the alleged abuser
- explain what you'll do next
- report what you've been told immediately (See Recording a Concern).

## Appendix 4: The Church's Charter on Domestic Abuse

Domestic Abuse in all its forms is unacceptable in the church and in society. The Seventh-day Adventist Church:

- Resolves to work towards making all our churches safe places where anyone who has experienced abuse can find sanctuary and informed help.
- Commends the guidelines Safe at Home for use in churches in membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
- Urges every local congregation to break the silence over domestic abuse.



# Safe at Home

## Charter on Domestic Abuse



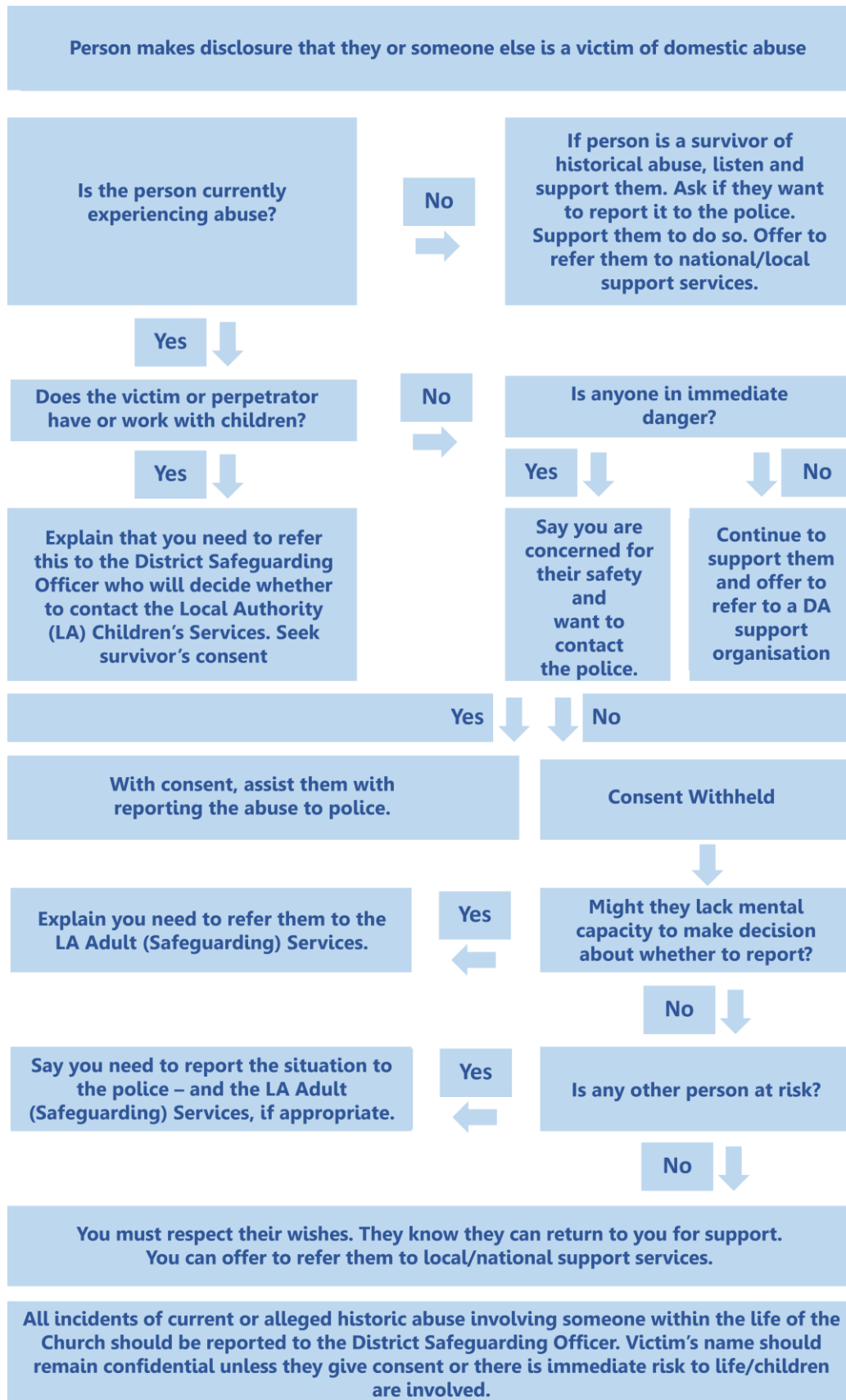

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### The Seventh-day Adventist Church:

1. Understands domestic abuse to be the violation of a person physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, socially, or financially within an intimate or family-type relationship and that forms a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour.
2. Holds that domestic abuse in all its forms is unacceptable and irreconcilable with the Christian faith and a Christian way of living.
3. Accepts that domestic abuse is a serious problem which occurs in church families as well as in wider society.
4. Undertakes to listen, support and care for those affected by domestic abuse.
5. Will always make the safety of victims of abuse a very high priority.
6. Will keep up to date with the work of domestic abuse agencies, will learn from them, and will publicise their work appropriately.
7. Will hold perpetrators of abuse accountable.
8. Believes in a God of love, justice, mercy and forgiveness.
9. Will live and teach what it means to be male and female equally made in God's image.
10. Will seek to train leaders to encourage the use of good practice guidelines, and keep the church informed about the implementation of this charter.

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Adventists Say No to Violence

## Appendix 5: How to Respond to a Domestic Abuse Disclosure



## Appendix 6: Recording Disclosure Conversation

### A step-by-step approach

- At the time of the disclosure only make very brief notes if this does not interfere with the intimacy or flow of the disclosure. Try to focus on who, when, where, what and how.
- Write up your notes as soon as possible after the disclosure (preferably within one hour - always within 24 hours). Ensure you record the place, date and time the conversation took place and who was present.
- Be sure to record who it is about (names of all key people, including any potential witnesses.)
- What happened? (Where possible, use exact quotes from the source of the information, using quotation marks.)
- How did it happen? (For example, if physical violence is alleged, was this done using an implement or with a kick or a hit?)
- When and where did this take place?
- Record any explanations offered to you by those involved. However, DO NOT INVESTIGATE OR ASK LEADING QUESTIONS. **Never ask a victim of abuse why they think the abuse occurred.** Quite apart from anything else, this could sound as if you are blaming them.)
- What should happen next? (What actions will follow? What will you do next? What is X going to do? Create a reminder to follow up in Y days' time.)
- Record what did happen next and the checks made to ensure effective follow up. (Did X do what they said they were going to do?)
- Views/perspective of the person at risk should be included. Avoid giving your own opinion on the matter.
- Do not destroy your original notes.
- Record the actual words used; including any swear words or slang.
- Depending on the age of the person, you might want to go through your written record with them afterwards to ensure you have captured everything correctly. They may or may not wish to do this or they may wish to add their own written notes too. Be led by the wishes of the person disclosing.
- You can record observable things but not your interpretations or assumptions – keep it factual. So, you might record that 'X was crying continually throughout the conversation'. However, you should avoid writing about emotional state, such as, 'X was very distressed throughout the conversation' as you may not know what distress looks like for X. Your observations may be shared with the person making the disclosure so you should be able to justify the reasoning for making any personal commentary. If a person is disclosing domestic abuse and they are wearing dirty, worn clothing and appear to have limited access to washing facilities etc. this might be relevant information about their current situation. If you offer your own analysis or opinion, rather than fact, this should be made clear in the record.
- If you have seen bruising or an injury, use a body map to record details. Again, ensure that the map is dated and attached to information relating to the person's comments about the injury.
- Save and date any drawings or artwork that formed part of the disclosure. Ensure these are submitted with the written report.
- Submit written record to relevant safeguarding lead/regulatory body/local authority/police without delay.
- Records must always be dated and the author identified.

<b>Record of Concern</b>	
(for use by any staff/volunteers– This form can be filled in electronically. If the form is handwritten care should be taken to ensure that the form is legible)	
Name of Church/Group:	
Name of Child/Adult:	
Subject of Concern:	
Address	
Date of Birth:	Gender:
Name of person reporting incident	
Phone contact number:	Email address:
Date and time alleged incident:	Time:
Other members of the household (There may be other victims/perpetrators):	
<p><b>The Concern: Sequence of events/actual words used/observations</b>            Record the following factually: Nature of concern, e.g. disclosure, change in behaviour, demeanour, appearance, injury, witnesses etc. (please include as much detail in this section as possible. Remember – the quality of your information will inform the level of intervention initiated. Attach additional sheets if necessary.)</p>	
How did the concern come to light?	
What is the child/adult saying about what has happened?	
Any other relevant information. Previous concerns etc.	

Action Taken (including person(s) contacted):	
Date and time of writing this report:	
Date and time of discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead/Pastor:	
Notes	
Signature:	Role/Job Title:
Name:	Date:

Check to make sure your report is clear to someone else reading it.

**Please pass this form to your Safeguarding Coordinator without delay**

## Appendix 7: Confidentiality and Data Protection

### Confidentiality

Although information relating to domestic abuse may be given in confidence, it should be made clear from the outset to the person providing the information, that in certain situations such information may be passed to a third party, (e.g. the police).

If domestic abuse information has been received in confidence, the provider of the information should be encouraged, in the first instance, to disclose it to the relevant authorities him or herself or alternatively, consent should be sought to make a disclosure. Seeking consent or encouraging a person to make a disclosure should always be the first option but there may be circumstances where consent is refused or cannot otherwise be obtained or is just inappropriate because it places a person at increased risk or might prejudice an ongoing investigation. In such cases, a recipient of the information may still be able to share the information without consent if it can be justified in the public interest. Such a public interest can arise in a wide number of situations, for instance, to protect a person, notably a child, from significant harm or prevent, help detect or prosecute a criminal offence.

The key factors in deciding whether to share confidential information without consent are necessity and proportionality, i.e. whether the proposed sharing is likely to make an effective contribution to preventing any risk and whether the public interest in sharing the information overrides the confidentiality.

In making the decision, a person should weigh up what are the risks if the information is shared against what are the risks if it is not shared and decide based on his or her professional judgement. If in doubt, advice should be sought. It may be necessary to make a disclosure without consent, for example, when a disclosure would be likely to assist in the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime, especially a crime of violence. When a victim of domestic abuse refuses to contact the police, disclosure will be justified if children remain at risk.

### Data Protection

Sensitive personal data includes information which relates to a person's physical or mental health, sexual life or to the commission or alleged commission of an offence. The use of such information, including disclosure to third parties, without the explicit consent of the data subject, (i.e. the individual to whom the information relates), is restricted by law. Nevertheless, there are certain instances, under data protection legislation, where such information can be shared without a data subject's consent provided that it is necessary and proportionate in order to:

- avoid obstructing an investigation or enquiry;
- avoid prejudicing the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of criminal offences or the execution of criminal penalties;
- protect public security;
- protect the rights and freedoms of others.

If you are unsure whether or not you can disclose personal and/or confidential information to a relevant third party, you should take advice.

### Storage of Confidential Records

All confidential records, whether or not they contain personal data, should be stored safely and securely.

## Appendix 8: Covering Your Tracks

If you are a victim of abuse, you may put yourself at risk if your abuser is able to “track” your computer use of the internet or email, if they identify the last telephone number you called, if they receive or access your voice mail or text messages, or if they can check your telephone bill for phone numbers called.

### FOR SAFE COMPUTER USE:

- Do a Web search on “cover your tracks” or “cyberstalking”.
- Check internet resources specific for victims of domestic violence and follow their instructions on internet and email safety, for example:
- Find and use a computer at a public library, an internet café, at the home of a trusted friend, a shelter for women, school, other community resources, or at work.
- Use an email password that your abuser will not know or be able to guess. Do not write down your password.

Browsers like Chrome, Internet Explorer, Firefox and Safari leave traces behind indicating where you’ve been and what you’ve been looking at on the Internet. Using ‘[Incognito](#)’ or similar mode can keep browsing private.

### What things are included in my history?

**Browsing & Download History:** Browsing history is the list of sites you’ve visited that are shown in the History menu, the Library window’s History list, and the Location bar autocomplete’s address list. Download history is the list of files you’ve downloaded that are shown in the Downloads window.

**Form & Search Bar History:** Form history includes the items you’ve entered into web page forms for Form autocomplete. Search Bar history includes items you’ve entered into Firefox’s Search bar.

**Cookies:** Cookies store information about websites you visit, such as site preferences or login status. This includes information and site preferences stored by plugins such as Adobe Flash. Cookies can also be used by third parties to track you across sites. For more info about tracking, see [How do I turn on the Do Not Track feature?](#)

**Note:** In order to clear cookies set by Flash you must be using the latest version. See [Updating Flash](#) for instructions.

**Cache:** The cache stores temporary files, such as web pages and other online media, that Firefox downloaded from the Internet to speed up loading of pages and sites you’ve already seen.

**Active Logins:** If you have logged in to a website that uses HTTP authentication since you most recently opened Firefox, that site is considered “active”. Clearing this logs you out of those sites.

**Offline Website Data:** If you’ve allowed it, a website can store files on your computer so that you can continue to use it when you are not connected to the Internet.

**Site Preferences:** Site-specific preferences, including the saved zoom level for sites, character encoding, and the permissions for sites (like pop-up blocker exceptions) described in the Page Info window.

### HOW TO COVER YOUR TRACKS SURFING THE WEB

It may not be safe for you to access sites for information about family violence from your computer. Your abuser could discover what sites you have visited. To hide your internet activities you need to clear the computer’s memory of the most recent pages you have accessed on the Internet. Here’s how to reduce the chances that your net travels will be traced.

#### If you use Internet Explorer:

Pull down the Safety menu, select Delete Browsing History.  
Select Temporary Internet Files, Cookies and History.  
Click Delete.

**If you use Microsoft Edge:**

Open the menu by clicking the three points in the top right corner.  
Go to the settings menu.  
Under "Clear Browsing History" click the "Choose what to clear".  
Select Temporary Internet Files, Cookies and History.  
Click clear.

**If you use Firefox:**

Click on the three bars on the top right bar.  
Open the history menu.  
Use the clear recent history button.  
Select the correct amount of time to clear.  
Click clear now.

**If you use Google Chrome:**

Open the menu by clicking the three points in the top right corner.  
Under the more tools menu open "Clear Browsing Data".  
Select the desired amount of time to clear.  
Make sure that "browsing history" and "cached images and files".  
Click the clear browsing data button.

**If you use Safari:**

Pull down the Edit menu, select Empty Cache, and click Empty.  
Pull down the History menu, select Clear History.

**If you use AOL:**

Pull down My AOL, select Preferences.  
Click on the WWW icon under Temporary Internet Files, click on "Delete Files".  
Under History, click on "Clear History".  
If you do not know which browser you are using, pull down the Help menu, and click on About. Please note, certain browsers update regularly and may change the steps required to clear your browser history.

A cleared history may raise suspicion. Once you have cleared your history, it is a good idea to access some sites on other subjects after you have cleared the cache so that it will have some items in it. For instance, check out the sites of newspapers, government, or entertainment.

Bright Sky is a safe, easy to use app and website that provides practical support and information on how to respond to domestic abuse. It is for anyone experiencing domestic abuse, or who is worried about someone else. The app can be set to appear as a weather app, a game or a calendar app. Bright Sky is available for the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#).

**FOR SAFE TELEPHONE USE:**

Change your access code for phone messages if your abuser knows the code used. Do not write down your access code.

Find and use a public telephone or use a secure telephone at work or of a trusted friend.

Have a trusted friend or co-worker receive telephone messages for you (for example, if you are receiving calls from a lawyer, local shelter, police, etc.)

When people are leaving you voice or text messages, ask them to be careful and to not identify the nature of the call or service.

Seek permission to use workplace resources – such as computers or telephones – to find information, so long as these resources are not available to your abuser.

Co-workers, managers, union representatives or others in the workplace might be willing to receive messages on your behalf or help you to find resources.

## Appendix 9: Challenging Misconceptions About Domestic Abuse

Many people will have misconceptions and attitudes about domestic abuse which are incorrect. Here are some common myths about what domestic abuse is and who it affects:

**MYTH:** **Abusers are violent because they cannot control their anger and frustration**  
**REALITY:** Abusers do not beat random people on the street, their parents or their bosses. They direct their violence only at their spouses. Anger management is not the solution. For most abusers, anger is a tactic, not a cause. Perpetrators of domestic abuse often show their ability to control their anger by becoming very calm and "reasonable" when explaining their abusive behaviour to others such as law enforcement.

**MYTH:** **Couples in an abusive relationship just need relationship counselling**  
**REALITY:** Domestic abuse is not a conflict resolution problem, it is an abuse of power. The problem belongs to the abuser. Giving an abuser marital counselling is like giving a child abuser parenting classes.

**MYTH:** **The abuse can't be that bad if she/he stays**  
**REALITY:** Survivors have many reasons for staying in an abusive relationship. There are social, economic, cultural, religious reasons why they might stay. Survivors may have no place to go. They may not have the means to support themselves or their children if they leave. They may be ashamed about the abuse. They may be reluctant to leave for emotional or religious reasons. They may fear that the abuser will carry out threats to harm her/him, him/herself the children, friends or family. A perpetrator of abuse will work to ensure that survivors feel that they cannot cope on their own. It is important to remember that leaving is a process not an event.

**MYTH:** **Abusers are often provoked into reacting**  
**REALITY:** There is never an excuse for abuse. No one deserves to be beaten or mentally tortured, no matter what the supposed provocation. Attacks are often triggered by innocent requests and actions. Domestic abuse is ALWAYS A CHOICE.

**MYTH:** **Abusive relationships will get better over time**  
**REALITY:** Once abuse begins, it tends to get progressively worse. It will not stop unless the abuser is held to account and gets professional help.

**MYTH:** **Perpetrators of abuse are always malevolent and brutal**  
**REALITY:** When they are not abusing, abusers can be very "loving" while promising it will not happen again. Abusers may lead very "normal" lives and appear to be very prominent and respectable members of the community, except for their violent, aggressive impulses within the family.

**MYTH:** **Alcohol and substance abuse cause violence.**  
**REALITY:** While alcohol/substance abuse are often correlated in cases of abuse, they are not the cause. Control and inhibition over violent behaviour may be reduced and used as an excuse, but survivors are usually abused whether the abuser is drunk or sober. Many people who abuse their spouse do not drink.

**MYTH:** **Perpetrators abuse because they are mentally ill**  
**REALITY:** Personality disorders, mental illness, poor impulse control, and generational abuse do not cause domestic abuse. Even in the minority of cases where a mental illness may cause a person to be abusive, the abuse is not specifically targeted at one person but to everyone around during the episode. However, if an abuser also has a mental illness, they may be more dangerous. For example, an abuser who is severely depressed may stop caring about the consequences of their actions, making them more of a threat to their partner.

**MYTH:** **Domestic abuse is always violent**  
**REALITY:** Actual physical violence can be a relatively small part of a relationship characterised by coercive control. Often the threat of violence is enough to maintain power and control. Emotional and psychological abuse are always associated with violently abusive relationships.

**MYTH:** **Abusers don't beat their children.**  
**REALITY:** Domestic violence against a spouse is often correlated with violence towards children. An abuser may be abusive to his/her partner without ever doing so to the child(ren). However, if the child is in an environment where they are witnessing abuse either visibly or audibly then it is still considered child abuse.

- MYTH:** **Once an abuser, always an abuser.**  
**REALITY:** Perpetrators can change with spiritual and professional help to find non-violent solutions to problems. They can change, but the majority do not. 9 out of 10 abusers do not believe they are doing wrong and need to end their violence. They never seek help.
- MYTH:** **Domestic abuse is a family matter – the community should not interfere**  
**REALITY:** Domestic abuse is a violation of Christian principles. We have a moral responsibility to help the oppressed. Domestic abuse is also against the law, and that makes it everyone's business. Assaults within the family are as much of a crime as assaults outside the family.
- MYTH:** **Domestic abuse only affects a small portion of the population**  
**REALITY:** 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6-7 men in the UK will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime.
- MYTH:** **A victim of abuse can fully understand what is happening to them**  
**REALITY:** When someone is in a relationship in which they are subjected to abuse they will often feel very confused about what is happening, and they are sometimes not sure that what they are experiencing is abuse. Abusers are very intentional about stripping the victim of their sense of value and their ability to cope.
- MYTH:** **The victim should stay for the sake of the children**  
**REALITY:** Child witnesses of domestic abuse on average exhibit more aggressive and antisocial behaviors, fearful and inhibited behaviors, anxiety, depression, trauma symptoms, temperament problems, and lowered social competence, than children who do not witness such violence. Youth who witness domestic abuse are more likely to attempt suicide, abuse drugs and alcohol, run away from home, commit other delinquent behavior, engage in teenage prostitution, and commit sexual assault crimes.
- MYTH:** **Perpetrators abuse because they come from violent homes**  
**REALITY:** There is definitive research to support the cycle of violence theory and there is no definite inevitable link. Some children grow up to make healthy choices and can go on to have positive relationships free from abuse. While we are profoundly influenced by our family of origin, our future is not determined by our past.
- MYTH:** **Domestic abuse is due to poverty or a lack of education**  
**REALITY:** Domestic violence is common throughout all levels of society, whether rich or poor. There is no evidence to support the idea that uneducated or poor people are more likely to abuse than are more educated and affluent people. Domestic abuse and violence can happen to anyone at any time.

## Appendix 10: Domestic Violence and Couple Counselling

The question of whether couples in abusive relationships should engage in couple counselling is one which has general consensus among domestic abuse organisations. For example, the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) states categorically, "We at The Hotline do not encourage anyone in an abusive relationship to seek counselling with their partner. Abuse is not a relationship problem." The issue in an abusive relationship is one of [power and control](#). Abusers are often not interested in fixing the relationship but rather, maintaining control.

Therapy is designed to create a "safe space" for couples who are interested in healing their relationship. For an abused partner, that safety doesn't necessarily extend to their home.

Within a coercive controlling relationship, it is highly likely that anything shared in a counselling session that puts the abuser in a negative light will expose the survivor to negative consequences outside of the counselling room. The abuser may use what is said in the counselling room as an excuse to punish the abused person.

Another reason that couple's therapy or counselling is not recommended is that the facilitator may not know about the abuse, which would make the entire process ineffective. Abusers tend to be effective at manipulating the truth and they can often make their partner seem responsible for the problems, especially if the abused person does not feel confident to speak up in their own defence.

The view that couples in a violent relationship should never enter couple counselling is not universal in the counselling profession. The Gottman Institute advocates that "[All Domestic Violence is Not Created Equal](#)". John Gottman posits that there are two types of domestic violence, situational v characterological.

Situational violence occurs when arguments have escalated out of control and the partners are not able to effectively manage conflict. It could be initiated by either partner, it does not leave lasting injuries, and medical attention is not needed. Gottman's research indicates that this type of violence is by far the most common representing 80% of violent interactions.

Characterological violence is part of a person's character or personality. This type of abuse is intentional and calculated. There is a clear abuser and a clear victim. It is pervasive and insidious. Michael P Johnson, author of "Typology of Domestic Violence" describes this type of abuse as "intimate terrorism". In such relationships, couple counselling is definitely not recommended for the reasons stated above.

It is also important to note that a relationship can be violent without being abusive where there is no power differential, and each partner gives as good as they get. The legal definition of abuse involved a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour.

Gottman argues that situational violence is exacerbated by an inability to control emotions and that couples in such relationships can benefit from couple counselling that teaches them how to regulate their emotions in addition to conflict resolution skills.

Relationship counselling can help partners understand each other, resolve difficult problems, and even help the couple gain a different perspective on their situation.

Anyone in an abusive relationship should do thorough research and take sound advice before deciding whether to engage in couple counselling when there is violence in the relationship.

## Appendix 11: When to Refer

Here are some suggestions to help pastoral carers know when it's time to refer to those who can provide more effective support.

1. **When you do not have the skills to support in a particular situation.** Know your limits. Operating outside of your competency can increase the risk of physical and emotional harm to survivors of abuse.
2. **When you do not have the time to support effectively.** Do not short-change the survivor by giving them haphazard support.
3. **When the support process serves your needs more than it serves the one seeking help.** In a vulnerable position, a hurting person will often follow the advice of those in positions of power, so it is extremely important not misuse the relationship to meet personal needs.
4. **When your role is compromised or lost by boundary violations.** Be careful that your support does not turn into a friendship, a romanticized relationship, or an affair. Always maintain professional distance.
5. **When your support compromises other vital responsibilities.** When you are increasingly giving extra attention to the hurting person in a way that is at the expense of your family, the church congregation or other important relationships.
6. **When intuitively you feel that something is not quite right in the relationship or when the boundaries are blurry or are being crossed.** There are spatial boundaries (such as touch or how close people sit) verbal boundaries (such as the appropriateness of words in a social or professional context), and time boundaries (phone calls or appointments at unusual hours) that need to be attended to.
7. **When the person seeking your help has begun to transfer unnecessary power, expectations, authority, responsibility upon you.** It is nice to feel valued and appreciated by the one you are helping. However, encourage the hurting person to trust others and God as a support network is developed.
8. **When you begin to over-identify with the hurting person's problem.** Everybody has a personal history of wounds, and some of that woundedness is unfinished business. Show appropriate empathy, but do not allow your issues to compromise the needs of the one who seeks help.
9. **When you have difficulty maintaining confidentiality.** Be honest with yourself and protect yourself from yourself.
10. **When you have no back up or support system or supervision to help with troubling situations.** Use peers, consultants and supervisors to help you stay honest with yourself.
11. **When there are serious threats or risks to the health, safety or welfare of the hurting person, others, or yourself.** Examples of such risk include the threat of suicide, homicide, violence or neglect. Notify the appropriate authorities (emergency, medical, social or psychiatric services.) Domestic violence requires caution and back up.

## Appendix 12: Domestic Violence Personalised Safety Plan

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The following steps represent my plan for increasing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility for further violence. Although I do not have control over my partner's violence, I do have a choice about how to respond to him/her and how to best get myself and my children to safety.

**STEP 1: Safety during a violent incident.** Women cannot always avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, victims may use a variety of strategies.

I can use some of the following strategies:

- A. If I decide to leave, I will \_\_\_\_\_  
(Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, lifts, staircase, or fire escapes would you use?)
- B. I can keep my purse and car keys ready and put them (location) \_\_\_\_\_  
in order to leave quickly.
- C. I can tell \_\_\_\_\_ about the violence and request that she or he call the police if she or he hears suspicious noises coming from my house.
- D. I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the Police, the Fire Service, and 999.
- E. I will use \_\_\_\_\_ as my code with my children or my friends so they can call for help.
- F. If I have to leave my home, I will go to \_\_\_\_\_  
(Decide this even if you don't think there will be a next time.)
- G. I can also teach some of these strategies to some or all of my children.
- H. When I expect we're going to have an argument, I'll try to move to a place that is low risk, such as \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons, or in rooms without access to an outside door.)
- I. I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I can give my partner what he/she wants to calm him/her down. I have to protect myself until I/we can get out.

**STEP 2: Safety when preparing to leave.** Abuse victims frequently leave the residence they share with the battering partner. Leaving must be done with a careful plan in order to increase safety. Abusers often strike back when they believe that the victim is leaving a relationship.

I can use some or all of the following strategies:

- A. I will leave money and an extra set of keys with \_\_\_\_\_ so I can leave quickly.
- B. I will keep copies of important documents or keys at \_\_\_\_\_.
- C. I will open a savings account by \_\_\_\_\_, to increase my independence.
- D. Other things I can do to increase my independence include: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- E. I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times. I understand that if I use my mobile, the following month's phone bill will show my abuser those numbers I called after I left. To keep my phone

communications confidential, I must either use coins, or I might ask to use a friend's phone card for a limited time when I first leave.

- F. I will check with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.
- G. I can leave extra clothes or money with \_\_\_\_\_.
- H. I will sit down and review my safety plan every \_\_\_\_\_ in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence. \_\_\_\_\_ (domestic violence advocate or friend's name) has agreed to help me review this plan.
- I. I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children.

**STEP 3: Safety in my own residence.** There are many things that victims can do to increase their safety in their own residence. It may be impossible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step.

Safety measures I can use:

- A. I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
- B. I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
- C. I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.
- D. I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
- E. I can install smoke detectors and fire extinguishers for each floor of my house/flat.
- F. I can install an outside lighting and recording system that activates when a person is close to the house.
- G. I will teach my children how to make a reverse charge call to me and to \_\_\_\_\_ (name of friend, etc.) in the event that my partner takes the children.
- H. I will tell the people who take care of my children which people have permission to pick them up and that my partner is not permitted to do so. The people I will inform about pick-up permission include:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (name of school)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (name of babysitter)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (name of teacher)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (name[s] of others)
- I. I can inform \_\_\_\_\_ (neighbour) and \_\_\_\_\_ (friend) that my partner no longer resides with me and that they should call the police if he is observed near my residence.

**STEP 4: Safety with an Order of Protection.** Many abusers obey protection orders, but one can never be sure which violent partner will obey and which will violate protection orders. I recognize that I may need to ask the police and the courts to enforce my protection order.

The following are some steps I can take to help the enforcement of my protection order:

- A. I will keep my protection order \_\_\_\_\_ (location). Always keep it on or near your person. If you change purses, that's the first thing that should go in the new purse.

- B. I will give my protection order to police stations in the community where I work, in those communities where I visit friends or family, and in the community where I live.
- C. I will inform my employer; my minister; my closest friend; that I have a protection order in effect.
- D. If my partner destroys my protection order, I can get another copy from the court.
- E. If the police do not help, I can contact an advocate or an solicitor and file a complaint.
- F. If my partner violates the protection order, I can call the police and report the violation.

**STEP 5: Safety on the job and in public.** Survivors of abuse must decide if and when they will tell others that their partner has abused them and that they may be at continued risk. Friends, family, and co-workers can help to protect the victim. Survivors should carefully consider which people to invite to help secure their safety.

I might do any or all of the following:

- A. I can inform my boss, the security supervisor, and \_\_\_\_\_ at work.
- B. I can ask \_\_\_\_\_ to help me screen my telephone calls at work.
- C. When leaving work, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- D. If I have a problem while driving home, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- E. If I use public transport, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- F. I will go to different supermarkets and shops to conduct my business and shop at hours that are different from those I kept when residing with my abusive partner.
- G. I can use a different bank and go at hours that are different from those kept when residing with my abusive partner.

**STEP 6: Safety and my emotional health.** The experience of being physically abused and verbally degraded by partners is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life takes much courage and incredible energy.

To conserve my emotional energy and resources and to avoid hard emotional times, if I feel down and am returning to a potentially abusive situation, I can do some of the following:

- A. When I have to communicate with my partner in person or by telephone, I can \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- B. I will try to use "I can ..." statements with myself and be assertive with others.
- C. I can tell myself, " \_\_\_\_\_ " whenever I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.
- D. I can read \_\_\_\_\_ to help me feel stronger.
- E. I can call \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ for support.
- F. I can attend workshops and support groups at the domestic violence program or \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ to gain support and strengthen relationships.

**STEP 7: Items to take when leaving.** When leaving, it is important to take certain items. Beyond this, survivors sometimes give an extra copy of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend just in case they have to leave quickly.

Money: Even if I never worked, I can take money from jointly held savings accounts. If I do not take this money, he can legally take the money and close the accounts.

Items on the following lists with asterisks by them are the most important to take with you. If there is time, the other items might be taken, or stored outside the home. These items might best be placed in one location, so that if we have to leave in a hurry, I can grab them quickly. When I leave, I should take:

- \*Identification for myself
- \*Children’s birth certificates
- \*My birth certificate
- \*Social Security cards
- \*School and vaccination records
- \*Money
- \*Chequebook, ATM card
- \*Credit cards
- \*Key - house, car, office
- \*Driver’s license and registration
- \*Medications
- \*Copy of protection order
- \*Welfare identification,
- \*Work permit, visa
  
- Passport(s), divorce papers
- Medical records - for all family members
- Property documents
- Bank books, insurance papers
- Address book
- Pictures, jewellery
- Children’s favourite toys and/or blankets
- Items of special sentimental value

Telephone numbers I need to know:

Police/ (local) - 999 or \_\_\_\_\_  
 Crown/Magistrates Court \_\_\_\_\_  
 Domestic Violence Organisations \_\_\_\_\_  
 National Domestic Violence Hotline: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Work number \_\_\_\_\_  
 Supervisor’s home number \_\_\_\_\_

I will keep this document in a safe place and out of the reach of my potential attacker.

Review date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 13: Personal Safety Precautions for Pastoral Carers

1. **If possible, avoid meeting alone with the abuser.** Choose the safest possible location to talk. Meet in a populated area with clear exit routes. You do not want you or the other person to be or to feel trapped, so easy access to exits, open doors, and windows are recommended. If you are going to confront the abuser, take someone with you.
2. **Pay close attention to body language.** Use observational data to recognize the signs of escalation including the person's posture, eye contact, facial expressions, physical gestures, muscle tone, voice and speech patterns etc.
3. **Identify the person's immediate goal.** Ask "I can tell you are really upset today. What can I do for you right now to help you feel calmer/safer?" Or "I'm worried about you, and I want to make sure that you and everyone else is safe right now. Can you tell me what's going on please?" Try to uncover what the real, underlying issue may be for this person today that has led them to be so activated.
4. **Express a desire to help without making promises you can't keep.** "I appreciate you coming in today. I'd like to help you if I can."
5. **Choose your words carefully.** If the abuser is in a state of agitation avoid questions, statements, or information that blame him/her for the problem. While this conversation will need to happen, that moment may not be the right time. The person needs to "save face" and feel in control right now.
6. **Set firm limits in a compassionate, respectful manner.** Use specific behavioural language. "In order for me to be more able to help you today, I'm going to ask you to please lower your voice, stand back a bit from me, and take a few deep breaths."
7. **Use assertive language.** If verbal redirections do not succeed, then move to limit-setting in a firm but flexible manner, offering choices when possible. "I still want to help you and I also need to keep everyone here feeling safe. I need you to either take a cool-down break right now or for you to leave and come back at another time. Which option do you prefer?" "I'm going to step out of the room for a moment and get some water. May I bring you some?" "We are unable to give you or any cash. Is there some other way I can help you today?"
8. **Use your own body language to diffuse the situation.** Examples include staying relaxed and empathic, keeping a reasonable distance, keeping yourself a bit lower than the client, hands down and palm out, a sideways stance, relaxed breathing, meeting gaze but not staring down, lowered voice and slow speech and friendly, confident tone.
9. **Call for back-up assistance when possible.** This may be anyone to directly assist you or to simply stand back and observe discretely.
10. **Flight is often a better option than fight.** If the abuser is overtly threatening, carrying a weapon of any kind, is assaulting you or damaging property, put as much distance as you can between you and the abuser. Keep your phone close by to call 999 immediately. You may feel confident to defend yourself but avoid a physical confrontation if possible.
11. **Make a record of what has taken place.** If specific threats have been made to yourself or to the abuser's victim, inform the police and the victim.

## Appendix 14: Domestic Abuse Legislation in the UK and ROI

### [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)

Created a statutory definition of domestic abuse, emphasising that domestic abuse is not just physical violence, but can also be emotional, controlling or coercive, and economic abuse. See also Domestic Abuse act 2021: Overarching Factsheet.

### [The Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Act 2021](#)

This bill creates a new domestic abuse offence for Northern Ireland that will make domestic abuse in all its forms a criminal offence. The bill legislates for controlling and coercive behaviour, as well as physical abuse, against a partner, former partner or family member.

### [Domestic Violence \(ROI\) Act 2018](#)

The Domestic Violence Act 2018 greatly improved domestic violence legislation in Ireland. It consolidated existing law on domestic violence and provides for additional protections for victims.

### [Domestic Abuse \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#)

The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 came into force in 2019. It recognises the multiple ways in which people are affected by domestic abuse. It also expands the definition of domestic abuse in Scottish criminal law, and how the police and courts investigate and prosecute this crime.

### [Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)

This Act aims to improve the public sector response in Wales to domestic abuse and violence against women.

## Laws Protecting Children and Adults at Risk of Harm

### [Children Act 1989](#)

Allowed the court may make a barring order under section 91(14) of the Children Act 1989 to prevent family proceedings that can further traumatise victims.

### [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023: Statutory Guidance](#)

A guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children.

### [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023: Statutory Framework](#)

Legislation relevant to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

### [Children Act 2004](#) and [Children and Families Act 2014](#)

The Children Act 2004 requires local authorities to make arrangements to promote cooperation between relevant partners with a view to improving the well-being of children locally. The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced a number of reforms notably around adoption and the time limit for courts to decide whether or not a child should be taken into care.

### [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#)

Provides amendments to both the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004

### [Care Act 2014](#)

Sets out how people's care and support needs should be met and introduces the right to an assessment for anyone, including carers, in need of support. It introduces a 'well-being principle' which places people's well-being at the centre of care and support services.

### Care Act 2014 - [Care and Support Statutory Guidance Issued under the Care Act 2014](#)

This is the first time we have had a law telling councils what to do to help keep adults safe from abuse or neglect. It explains what abuse is and what organisations can do to work together to keep people safe.

### [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups 2006](#)

Introduced to restrict contact between children and persons at risk with those who might do them harm. Principles:

- unsuitable persons should be barred from working with children or persons at risk
- employers should have a straightforward means of checking that a person is not barred from working with children or persons at risk
- suitability checks should not be one-offs: there should be an element of ongoing assessment of suitability to catch those who commit wrongs following a suitability check

### [Mental Capacity Act 2005](#)

There will be circumstances where an individual adult appears not to be able to make a decision about whether to consent to information being shared with others. The Mental Capacity Act and the associated code of practice contain guidance about the consideration of a person's capacity, or lack of capacity, to give consent to sharing information. The starting assumption must be that the person has capacity unless it is established that they do not, and only then after all practical steps to help the person make the relevant decision have been taken but have been unsuccessful. An unwise decision taken by the relevant person does not mean they lack capacity. Where a decision is made on behalf of the person who lacks capacity to share personal information, it must still comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act and be in their best interests.

### [Age UK Factsheet 78: Safeguarding Older People from Abuse and Neglect](#), December 2023

Explains the new laws on safeguarding adults and helps individuals decide what to do where there are concerns that an older person may be at risk of abuse or neglect.