

# Pastoral Care and Supporting Survivors

## Webinar Transcript

### [Introduction]

Hello, and welcome to our webinar on Pastoral Care and Supporting Survivors. This webinar will be two and a half hours long and we'll have a five-minute break around halfway through the session. You should have received a link to the slides and the handbook for this course, you will need these throughout the discussion so please have them ready. There are accessible formats available, so please let the host or the co-host know if you would like those and don't have them already. Ideally, we would like your webcams enabled, but we ask that you keep your sound muted until you want to speak. We do this because we want to minimise the distractions that background noise could create for people, but we also want to be able to see that everyone is there and engaged and be visible for anyone lipreading. We understand there might be occasions where you would prefer to have the webcam off. For example, if

you're having problems with your internet speed, or you've got children who need your attention. If possible, please just let the co-host know if this is the case. Just to say that information shared can be of a sensitive nature, and some of the content is not appropriate for children, so if children are in the room, we ask that you use earphones so that they can't hear the content. Also, if you're happy to share any of your own experiences, please bear in mind confidentiality. We ask that you anonymise any examples, experiences or stories that you share. The chat facility can be used throughout for questions and for participation in activities. The co-host might answer the question, signpost you to further sources or hold on to that question for the next pause and share it with the host. If a question is not answered, or a question is about a very specific issue, please do call our safeguarding help-centre.

It is important to keep yourselves emotionally safe during the training and if you need to take a breather from the webinar, that's okay and you can rejoin whenever you feel able to. It might be good to think about somebody you could reach out to

if uncomfortable feelings or memories come to the surface. You might need to find support for yourself, or it might be that you're concerned about someone else or another situation after the session. If that's the case, please do contact our help-centre as soon as you can because the trainer is not equipped to give specific advice on the webinar platform.

Thirtyone:Eight is the UK's largest independent Christian safeguarding organisation. Our mission is threefold - to equip, to empower and to encourage churches, charities and faith-based groups in their safeguarding responsibilities. We do that in a lot of ways including training, consultancy, background checks, our research and our help-centre. Our help-centre email address is [helpline@thirtyoneeight.org](mailto:helpline@thirtyoneeight.org) and the number is 0303 003 1111. They are there to support with any questions you may have with regards to safeguarding. It might be about your policy, or a live situation, or there might be a concern that you have which you would value talking over with somebody. We operate from 7am until midnight, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Finally, our name Thirtyone:Eight is taken from a book in the Bible, Proverbs. It's chapter 38 verse 1 and it says, 'speak out on behalf of the voiceless and for the rights of all who are vulnerable.' We passionately believe that there's a biblical mandate for safeguarding and when we fulfill our responsibilities in safeguarding, we're taking work on that is very close to the heart of God. If you belong to another faith group, I know many of you have sacred scripts that have a very similar mandate, so we are very much working together in this vision of safeguarding vulnerable people.

### **[Course context]**

One of the key reasons this course has been developed is because we are aware that many churches are moving away from the model of pastoral care being delivered exclusively by ministers and employed pastoral workers because this is not sustainable. Churches of all denominations are developing 'every member ministry' models. Church members are encouraged to care for one another through small groups, for example, and the organic development of Christian friendship.

This is an appropriate biblical model which works well much of the time. However, problems can arise when people fall through the gaps because they are not in small groups or, especially in larger churches, they can go unnoticed. Also, without careful thought and clear processes, people can blur the boundaries between friendship and pastoral care and end up in difficult situations. Sometimes, people do not recognise when others have more complex pastoral needs and fail to refer them to those who have specialist skills. Also, following adaptations made during the lockdowns due to covid-19, many churches now meet in a 'hybrid' way, with some people online and some in the building, and this has implications for pastoral care as well.

We also want to ensure our communities are safe and supportive environments for those who have experienced abuse. How can we respond in a way that does good not harm? How can we journey alongside people in a way that honours their dignity, agency and individuality? This session includes the voices of those with lived experience of abuse and

will give us space to listen and reflect on how we can respond well. Through discussions, videos, case scenarios and taught content, we hope this course will empower you to develop a strong safeguarding culture that underpins pastoral support that includes everyone.

### **[Course structure]**

The course consists of four modules. In module one, we will reflect on the Biblical basis for safeguarding and pastoral care and explore how Christian pastoral care complements the current legislative framework. In module two, we will use a case study to highlight the importance of working within safe boundaries when offering pastoral care and review best practice for offering pastoral care. In module three, we seek to develop our understanding of how to offer pastoral support to survivors of abuse. Finally, in module four, we will consider the breadth of pastoral ministry in churches and the safeguarding implications of this.

## [Module 1]

Let's begin module one, exploring a good practice framework for pastoral care. We will consider the distinctiveness of Christian pastoral care, look at who pastoral carers are, identify the challenges of devolving pastoral care and explore the safeguarding implications of all this.

On page two of your course handbook, you will find our first exercise. This is a reflective question: "What is distinctive about Christian pastoral care?" Please feel free to unmute and share your ideas or type them into the chat. There is space in your handbook to make your own notes too.

Christian pastoral care looks different in each church and in every relationship. It may involve some or all of the following: Supporting others through prolonged difficulty or immediate need – this is one of the most recognisable aspects of Christian fellowship; I'm sure many of us can think of times in our lives when we have been supported by our church families in difficult times or have been part of providing that support to others. It could involve mentoring and support through difficult decision

making, enabling people to be guided by their own convictions. It could mean considering the process of reconciliation with God, ourself and others; offering guidance about other resources or enabling different perspectives to identify solutions.

A pastoral carer is someone who either formally, as part of a pastoral care team, group or network, or informally, as part of their fellowship group or everyday relationships in the community, offers care and support to another, in the knowledge of being loved themselves by God and in the hope of sharing that love with others. Good practice requires an understanding of the complexities of personal relationships and awareness of the impact that offering pastoral care can have upon ourselves. Ideally, pastoral care should be supervised and supported, either with a colleague, or peers or a suitably qualified professional.

### **[The All, Some, Few Model]**

The 'All, Some, Few' model is a way of thinking about pastoral care and our role in the body of Christ:



ALL Christians have a God-given responsibility to care for others; this is part of the outworking of what it means to be a member of the Body of Christ. The pastoral care we all offer each other is part of growing and maintaining Christ-centred loving relationships and it mostly happens in informal and often unplanned ways. ALL help to grow pastoral churches or communities which care for each other in organic ways, without necessarily being part of formalised pastoral structures or systems.

SOME Christians are particularly gifted and called by God to provide pastoral care in a more focused way. This may include offering and providing pastoral care in more planned and formal ways, perhaps as part of a dedicated team of pastoral carers. It may involve a pastoral carer undertaking training and / or developing knowledge, insights, skills and expertise in pastoral care at a greater depth than 'the all'. The 'SOME' use their gifts for the good of the whole community.

A FEW Christians are particularly called and gifted to resource, lead or co-ordinate the work of pastoral care in planned, structured and formalised ways. The FEW may have specialist knowledge, experience and skills to enable, encourage and equip the pastoral care work of 'the all' and 'the some', and provide them with, for example, training, leadership, and help to reflect on their practice and support.

### **[Managing expectations and blurred boundaries]**

Consider the following two statements. What problems might arise from these positions. Firstly, "The minister never came to see me!" and secondly, "I don't need to be part of a team, I'm just doing this as a friend." Feel free to unmute and share an observation or add comments to the chat.

The first comment might stem from a tension in the fact that many churches are moving from a ministerial to a every member model of pastoral care. We need to change the culture of expectations that are put upon ministers and pastors, so nobody feels their pastoral support 'didn't count' because it

wasn't offered by a particular leader. Unless we do this, ministers and pastors will continue to be overloaded and burn out. Changing a culture is not a quick and easy task. It needs time, care, sensitivity and good communication if it is to happen well. We need to ensure our volunteers are equipped and empowered through strong recruitment procedures, training and support structures and the whole church has shared expectations.

The whole community needs to understand the church's structures and procedures around pastoral care so messages can get through to the right people. The opposite tendency from over-reliance on the minister can also be true and this holds its own difficulties. Sometimes, friendship groups or small groups offer care and support to each other, but no one thinks to tell the minister or pastoral care team and the person in receipt of care feels they have been neglected by the church because the minister / pastoral worker hasn't been in touch with them.

Safeguarding concerns may also be missed if those providing

support don't have the same level of training as the people in more formalised pastoral care teams.

The second comment is very common in churches. Sometimes people are reluctant to take on the responsibilities of 'an official role', lack the confidence to put themselves forward or feel structures are unnecessary. When offering significant levels of pastoral support outside of a recognised role, people act out of good intentions but lack support, supervision and accountability. Sometimes, people can be excellent befrienders and carers but lack the understanding or discernment to know when pastoral needs are complex and the person needs signposting to further help from leaders or other agencies.

When people operate beyond the limits of their own competency, the church ceases to be a safe place for all.

Training a team can be relatively easy to manage but developing the understanding of the wider congregation can be a huge challenge. Pastoral relationships at all levels will often run parallel with friendships and social contacts, but it is essential that they always remain distinct.

Many churches are involving their congregations in an 'every member' model of pastoral care. What are the safeguarding implications of this? Feel free to unmute and add a comment, or type into the chat. We will explore this further in module two.

## **[Module two]**

In this module we will explore the characteristics of healthy boundaries in pastoral relationships and examine the unhealthy characteristics of abuse of trust, creating dependency, and when care becomes coercive.

What do you think are the characteristics of healthy boundaries in pastoral relationships? Feel free to unmute and add a comment, or type into the chat.

A pastoral relationship with healthy boundaries respects, values and nurtures each person offering practical help and support; guides behaviour but respects choices; encourages reflection through biblical teaching; allows healthy accountability to others and recognises when pastoral needs are complex and need signposting to others, avoiding the creation of dependency. We

will now spend some time in breakout rooms exploring this further through discussion of the case study in your handbook.

[Case study is in four parts and can be found on pages 5-8 of the course handbook. During the webinar each part will be discussed in breakout rooms with feedback in the main group. Key learning from the case study is around healthy boundaries and the potential damage caused when these are not maintained. This is described further in the remainder of this module.]

As we have seen in the case study, healthy boundaries that are clearly defined at the beginning of a pastoral care relationship are really important, for the wellbeing of both the person being cared for and the carer. It allows a safe, supportive relationship to develop, manages expectations and avoids hurt, misunderstanding and resentment. There are some unhealthy behaviours that we also need to guard against when we are caring for each other and spending time thinking through healthy boundaries is an important tool for doing this.

Firstly, we'll explore the important difference between care and co-dependency. A healthy pastoral care relationship involves balance and recognises that both people involved have a life outside this relationship, as well as agency and ability. Offering pastoral care is purposeful, life-giving and can deepen our sense of value and belonging, but it shouldn't define who we are or dictate how we spend all our time. When this balance isn't right, unhealthy views and behaviours may develop. For example, a person may come to view themselves or behave as though they are the sole life-support system for someone else. From the outside they may appear to be manifesting exemplary Christian care, but such relationships may not be healthy and may not help people to look to God, their own resources, other people and professional help during difficult times. Some other warnings signs of co-dependency might be where pastoral relationships are confused with personal friendships, for example, pastoral carers are visiting someone alone in their home late at night or allowing the person they are pastorally supporting to visit them in the same circumstances. The

pastoral carer may make themselves available 24/7, which is not appropriate, sustainable or healthy. Romantic attachments may develop. Romantic relationships do develop between people in church and this is not a bad thing, but open, honest accountability is needed straight away if an attraction forms during a pastoral care relationship as careful thought is needed around power imbalance and appropriate boundaries. These two sorts of relationships should be distinct and not run concurrently. Another warning sign is inappropriate confidentiality, more akin to sharing or holding of secrets - concerns that should be passed on to a minister or safeguarding lead are held by the pastoral carer.

Recognising when unhealthy, co-dependent relationships are developing can be difficult in Christian communities. The Bible teaches that we are to be interdependent on one another and put the needs of others before our own. It is possible and good to live like this but we need to be thoughtful and reflective to do this in a healthy way. Codependency describes a relationship in which one person is perpetually needy and the other person is



perpetually rescuing – this is an unhealthy combination. The rescuer often takes on the role of the martyr and may struggle to cope with the sense of not being needed. The rescuer enables the needy to become even more dependent and their condition becomes worse rather than better. Good pastoral care enables the person being cared for to thrive and contribute to the life of the body of Christ. It brings equity.

If co-dependency is part of the culture and remains unchallenged, the situation can get worse and care can become coercive. The ‘rescuer’ may start to assume the authority of God in the life of the person they are caring for, exerting increasing control over all areas of that person’s life – work, finances, relationships and life decisions. The subject can become fearful of displeasing the ‘rescuer’, lose all autonomy and be disempowered.

In some cases, unhealthy pastoral relationships can even become abusive. Abuse of Trust is defined in the Sexual Offences Act of 2003 but it is not restricted to sexual matters.

The position of trust definition now includes faith leaders in places of worship. We need to keep accountable to each other and look out for the warning signs of unhealthy relationships. Even in healthy, accountable, boundaried pastoral relationships we all need to be aware that there can be an imbalance of power. When we are aware of this, we can be more mindful of our behaviour and the way our words and actions can affect other people. We need to be aware that we can be exercising power and influence even if this is not our intention.

Accountability, supervision and peer support can also help us identify how those we are caring for may be feeling and responding. Pastoral care can give rise to strong emotions and lead to transference of emotions. If we don't take time to reflect and debrief we can end up in a painful situation like the one in the case study.

Those who provide pastoral care for their church communities also need to be equipped to care for themselves. Pastoral workers need support- to know they are not doing this alone and it is not their responsibility to fix somebody's difficult

situation. Understanding what the role is and what it isn't is key if this work is to be sustainable; clear expectations help us to feel secure, recognise when demands are unreasonable and give permission to say no without feeling guilty.

Accountability is an important part of this supportive structure. Sometimes we can become so deeply involved in a situation that we can no longer recognise whether healthy boundaries are being crossed or not. By being accountable to each other, pastoral workers can identify this more easily and keep themselves and others safe as a result.

Churches need to care for their carers! Journeying with people through difficult times is often part of a pastoral worker's role and this takes its toll. They need time to debrief and may need emotional support themselves if they are experiencing vicarious trauma. We are all human so the people who offer pastoral care will also have difficult times in their own lives and can sometimes miss out on support themselves because everyone is used to them being in the supporting role.

Training is a vital aspect of equipping pastoral carers. Churches have a responsibility to ensure that their workers, paid and voluntary, know how to fulfil their roles in a safe and healthy way. It is easy for people to end up in difficult and painful positions if they are not given the skills and information they need to navigate their work. There can be assumptions made that everyone understands what pastoral support entails whereas, in reality, five different people may well give five different responses. Training at the beginning of a role and at regular intervals after that helps teams maintain a common understanding and good practice.

Supervision allows pastoral workers to debrief, learn from their experiences and feel supported and valued. It is also an important part of keeping accountable, ensuring everyone is up to date with current policies and processes and making sure any concerns are dealt with well.

Self-reflection is a valuable skill to develop as a pastoral carer. It gives that intentional space and time to step back from the

situations we are involved in and examine our thoughts, feelings, actions and motivations. When we are just responding to a person in the moment or are so busy that we don't take time to pause and reflect, boundaries can slip and we can make decisions we later come to regret. Building in regular times for self-reflection can be a real gift to ourselves, and those whom we serve, in our pastoral caring role.

### **[Module three]**

In module three we are going to consider how we can best support those who have been abused. In this module we will explore the impact of abuse on those who experience it; the silence that can exist around abuse; how to make the church a safer place to disclose abuse of any kind; how to support those who have experienced abuse and signposting to other agencies.

We will begin by thinking about terminology. Words are powerful; they can cause harm or bring healing. We may have heard different terminology used to identify people with lived

experience of abuse. The most commonly used terms are 'victim' and 'survivor', the first perhaps emphasises the reality that abuse has an impact and a person has been wronged, and the second perhaps the agency of a life beyond abuse.

We need to be careful that we don't impose labels on people or conflate one term with strength and another with weakness.

Allow people to talk about themselves in the way they feel most comfortable and be aware that this may change from day to day, even within the same conversation – it's not as simple as a person being a victim to start with and journeying to become a survivor. When we are supporting those who have experienced abuse, we need to listen well, not make assumptions, be ready to learn and give that person the dignity of self-definition, including choosing not to identify with any particular term.

The next part of the session contains videos of two women who have experienced abuse sharing part of their stories. They are powerful accounts and may well have an emotional impact on you. If you feel that this wouldn't be a safe or healthy

experience for you, please feel free to take time away from your screen while they are played. The first video is 5 minutes long and the second is almost 8 minutes long. We don't always know what we will find upsetting so if you stay for the videos and are then impacted by anything in them, please seek support from somebody with you or contact our help-centre.

As you watch the videos, consider the question: if these stories of lived experience of abuse [recent or non-recent] were shared directly with you, how would you try to respond well? During and after the videos, reflect on the following questions: What do you find challenging in these stories? Are there any emotions or approaches that you feel the church values over others? How can we respond well to all expressions of experience?

Responding well starts with listening well and being fully present with the person telling us, validating them for the courage it has taken to share. We may be the first person they have told about this and our response can have a powerful impact. Even if we are not the first person, there's a reason why

they are sharing this with us at this moment and our response will matter. Our body language, facial expressions and verbal responses can convey empathy, respect and reassurance or judgement, disinterest or panic – it's not difficult to identify which would be more helpful.

It's important not to assume we know how people feel or what they want to happen next. Some may want support to report, some might want to just tell their story. Different people react in different ways to very similar experiences. We may know someone else who has had a similar experience, we may even have had this ourselves, but this doesn't mean we know how the person disclosing is feeling or the best way to support them; this is another reason why listening is key.

We want to empower the person disclosing. One of the wounds of abuse is the taking away of somebody's agency and control over their own body and choices. Where victims feel they have been silenced, the effects of abuse are compounded. Timely intervention and signposting can be restorative. We can make



the person aware of places they can seek further support and, wherever possible, give them the choice of next steps to take. Many people will benefit from the parallel support of pastoral care and professional counselling or help from other specialist agencies. We shouldn't try and be a person's sole support network or keep things 'in house'.

Churches can be communities of redemption and healing for those who have been abused but there is also the potential that aspects of church life could be difficult and painful and add to a person's struggle. Teaching, preaching and leaders' attitudes can break down barriers or make a person feel more isolated. Christian/church expectations can be unhelpful for someone who has experienced abuse. For example, if a person feels unable to forgive, messages about forgiveness may lead to feelings of guilt and unworthiness. Some people who have experienced abuse struggle with anxiety and depression and a sense of shame. Preaching intended to bring freedom from worry can make people feel they are poor disciples if they cannot leave everything at the foot of the cross. Teaching that

links sex with sin may leave a person who has been sexually abused feeling guilty and dirty. Some may see it as their fault in the belief they consented but consent must be informed and abuse is never the fault of the abused person. This doesn't mean we can never talk about these or other aspects of Christian life, but it does mean we can pause and reflect about how our words may be heard by someone who has experienced abuse. Leaders modelling what it means to be honest and vulnerable can also be freeing as it dispels the illusion that 'everyone here is perfect'. A sensitive sentence or two at the start of a talk to say there are life experiences that make some of the themes discussed more complex and difficult can be validating, especially if it is also clear that talking about these experiences is not off limits in this community.

A word on forgiveness. Forgiveness is an integral and beautiful part of Christian life. However, it is never easy, and it isn't cheap, we know this from the life and death of Jesus. It may be a very gradual process. Pushing forgiveness before someone is ready isn't helpful and isn't likely to bring the freedom and

peace we know it can. A person may feel pressured into adopting a position of forgiveness before it is a real experience for them in order to be a 'good Christian' or fit in with expectations. This pressure may delay healing rather than accelerate it and it puts a weight on the person who has been abused that isn't theirs to bear- the other side of forgiveness is the abuser accepting responsibility for what they have done.

We also need to keep in mind the usual procedures for any disclosure or safeguarding concern: The 5 Rs: Recognise, Respond, Record, Report, Reflect. Don't be tempted to investigate any concerns yourself. Think about the environment you are in when having sensitive conversations- is this a safe place, where you are not likely to be interrupted yet open enough that the person talking doesn't feel threatened or enclosed? Ensure the person knows the disclosure is being taken seriously, that you are actively listening, and they are valued and safe.

Many of those who experience abuse describe their level of fear about telling their story, especially if they have tried to tell it before and not been heard. Therefore, it is really important that it is made clear to them what will happen with their information. You can reassure the person that their story will not be shared without their knowledge. It is also essential that they understand you may need to report any safeguarding information they tell you to somebody else. We can't promise never to tell anyone but we can affirm that we will only tell the people who need to know at the time they need to know it and we will keep them informed at every stage of the process.

It is important that all involved in the disclosure have some support going forward, including the person accused if appropriate – for example if they were another member of your church, but there should be separate support for those disclosing and those who are accused; the same minister / pastor or pastoral worker shouldn't be asked to support both people.

If there is a need to pass on information but the individual does not give consent for you to share, consider: Is anyone else at risk? Has a serious crime been/will be committed? Does the person appear to understand the implications of not doing anything? How likely is it that the individual or someone else will come to serious harm? Can you provide them with more information to help them understand the risk and are there any other services that could help? There are some situations when we need to report without a person's consent. For example, children cannot withhold consent to report. Safeguarding children carries a legal duty to pass on concerns so children can be protected. Even for adults, the answers to some of the questions above may mean we have to report our concern externally, even if they don't want us to. However, this should never be done lightly – seek advice if you're unsure. We don't want to report a situation without the consent of the person who experienced it. Abuse takes away a person's agency and control and we don't want to do that again. Also, any police investigation or other intervention will be much more likely to

succeed with the person's co-operation than without it.

However, on some occasions the level of risk may force us to take this difficult step. Please talk to your safeguarding lead or our help-centre to get advice and support before you do this, unless it is a 999 situation, in which case you need to make that call before contacting the Safeguarding Lead or an advice line.

### **[Possible effects of abuse]**

The impact of abuse can sometimes be delayed and is often long lasting. A person might struggle with painful memories, flashbacks and triggers and there can be an impact on both mental and emotional wellbeing. Some people who have experienced abuse describe feeling isolated or different from other people, for example, as though a pane of glass separates them from the world. Experiencing abuse may impact on a person's family and social relationships. The imbalance of power in an abusive situation can mean that those who have experienced abuse have difficult relationships with authority figures. Abuse of somebody's body or mind is also abuse of their trust. People who have experienced abuse may withdraw

and avoid placing trust in anyone or seem to test relationships and long for affirmation from someone who will not abuse their trust.

There is a correlation between childhood abuse and subsequent self-injurious behaviour, however, it is important to understand that this is not always the case. Those who have experienced abuse can often demonstrate verbal self-abuse as well. If we notice these behaviours in anyone we are pastorally caring for we can be compassionately curious and open up opportunities for talking and reassurance without judgement. We should also get advice from a safeguarding lead and the thirtyone:eight help-centre about possible signposting and professional support.

As mentioned earlier, abuse of any type in any context can lead to a crisis of trust because trust has been broken. This can have an impact on faith and trusting God. Added to that, if messages have been given that convey conditional 'love' or abusive acts have been labelled as 'love', it can be very difficult

to receive the unconditional love of our Heavenly Father. Some of the language, behaviours and structures of church life can be difficult or painful for a person who has experienced abuse.

Many people who have experienced abuse carry an anger they feel unable to express as it wouldn't be an 'acceptable' emotion for their church community. Compassionate, active listening, reliability, patient support and acceptance can be key aspects of helping a person rebuild trust.

In all forms of abuse it is really important to stress that it is never the victim's fault. A person who has experienced abuse may have been given messages that stated the opposite, or felt strong feelings of guilt and blame, that it was something they did that led to the abusive events. However, the abusive behaviour is the responsibility of the abuser.

### **[Supporting a person who has experienced abuse]**

You may find yourself being the only person that someone who has experienced abuse feels able to trust. This is an extremely privileged position but not always an easy one. Ensure you



seek your own forms of support; it can be hard to walk through pain with someone and your own wellbeing is important. Also, remember to put in appropriate boundaries. We've explored before how vital these are and boundaries actually help build trust because you can be clear and reliable about what you are able to do and what you are not.

Listening with understanding can be so powerful and might be all the support that somebody needs. Be encouraging and non-judgmental. It may well be important to signpost to professional counselling as well as being there to listen ourselves.

As mentioned before, we need also to be mindful of any risks that still exist. We may be supporting someone to pursue justice if the abuser is still around. We need to keep in contact with our safeguarding lead to ensure any necessary actions can be taken.

## **[Module four]**

In this module we will explore, types of ministries that include pastoral care; prayer ministry guidelines; selecting and

equipping workers; good practice guidelines; codes of conduct and keeping records.

Consider all the activities in your church that involve any kind of pastoral care where people seek help and support. Many activities may have an element of informal pastoral care where workers have not been trained in safeguarding or pastoral care. For example, someone delivering a meal to a new mum - the worker may spot signs of post-natal depression – what should they do with these concerns? You can go on to consider who needs what level of training and how people in church can be accountable to and supportive of each other.

Some examples of groups and ministries to consider are children and youth activities, small groups and study groups, community hubs, food banks and holiday clubs. People may also seek help from each other when serving together in teams, within meetings, when chatting over coffee, on social media and when praying together. Pastoral care runs through our relational communities at all levels and at all times, not just

within planned ministries. So it is good to consider how we communicate to our whole community what to do if they are concerned about someone.

### **[Safer Practice]**

One of the ways we create a healthy safeguarding culture in our churches and faith communities is through safer practice—the day-to-day things we do to prevent harm occurring and demonstrate our values. We'll think through some aspects of safer practice now, but we encourage you to reflect further on this in light of your own context and activities. The first example is transparency and clear communication. Is openness encouraged in your community? Are decisions explained and the reasons for key actions and processes communicated widely and well? If so, this helps build trust and enables everyone to know what to expect from us. Would visitors and members of your community of all ages and abilities know who to contact if they need support? Do you have posters with team photos and contact details displayed, for example? Are there clear pathways for pastoral care? Are safeguarding, pastoral

care and the other ways we take care of each other spoken about from the platform in Sunday services? For people who don't receive emails or access information on noticeboards, this could be their only means of finding out about the support available and the culture we want to create.

The second aspect of safer practice is equipping our teams. Do we provide regular training and supervision for our workers, volunteers and group leaders? Are there clear codes of conduct so that anyone in any role knows what is expected of them, and what isn't? Do we follow a safer recruitment process that goes beyond a criminal record check? For example, an expression of interest form and a conversation to explore someone's motivations, skills, expectations and needs. Do we give people a probationary period where they and we can determine their suitability for a role and any areas where they require support? Do we equip people to understand the boundaries of their role so they are working safely and not beyond their availability and competency limits?

Thirdly, risk assessment and risk management. Do we regularly review all our activities and identify any risks they might pose? Do we put strategies in place to minimise and mitigate risk? Do we have a lone working policy, for example, so that staff and volunteers are not put at unnecessary risk?

What other aspects of safer practice can you identify in your community?

### **[Prayer Ministry]**

Prayer Ministry is a wonderful opportunity to minister to one another and invite God to minister through the Holy Spirit.

However, it is essential that those who operate in prayer ministry are carefully selected, trained, and supported. There should be a team leader to whom people can go with any concerns.

It is important to work in pairs and, wherever possible, for the pairs to be mixed gender. New members of the team should work alongside those who are experienced. It is essential to be sensitive to people's sense of personal space; not everyone

wants to be touched or have hands laid on them, especially if they are victims / survivors of abuse. Ask sensitively whether or not they would like hands laid on them, never assume.

Prayer ministry should be confidential, however there are limitations to this. Always talk to your safeguarding lead if what someone tells you as part of prayer ministry makes you worried that they or someone else may not be safe. We may also offer to refer the person for pastoral care and there may be additional signposting we can give, where appropriate and with consent.

Prayer ministry is a time to ask God to minister, not for volunteers to preach or counsel, and prayer should never be coercive or blaming.

### **[Policies and Action Plans]**

As we come to the final part of our training, let's think through a checklist of what we can have in place to ensure our pastoral ministry is safe and effective. Do you already have policies and procedures that cover pastoral care? When was the last time

these were reviewed? Do they cover the following: Selecting, equipping and supporting workers; safer recruitment; induction training and support; specific training on safeguarding; good practice guidelines; responsibilities of teams working within a wider safer culture; keeping records and recording concerns.

Do all workers and volunteers have a code of conduct which sets out expectations for behaviour and clarifies safer boundaries for working?

Do your visiting teams keep records of visits – date, time, any concerns (sensitive information should be referenced to other records)? Are entries signed and dated? What is your system for recording incidents and concerns for all activities? Is this communicated clearly and stored securely?

Exercise 7 in your course handbook is an action plan. Think about the areas we have just discussed and any other aspects of pastoral care we have touched on today. Note anything that you think need to be in an action plan for you, your team, your

trustees and senior leaders, and your wider church or organisation. Get the whole organisation on board!

### **[Learning Review]**

As we come to the end of our course, let's review our learning. Together we have sought to: Understand the importance of working within safe boundaries when offering pastoral care; consider the implications of this across the breadth of pastoral ministries in your setting; develop our understanding of how to support survivors of abuse; and reflect on best practice for selecting, supporting and training pastoral workers.

### **[Thank you]**

Thank you for your participation in today's training. Before you turn off your computer, please make a note of one or two key things that you've learned, any questions that you have, and topics you would like to explore further. We would really value your honest feedback, please complete the form and help us equip, empower and encourage more delegates in the future.



Thank you once again for joining us today and for all you do to create safer places.