

# Safeguarding in Pastoral Ministry

Handbook

# Introduction

Welcome to the Thirtyone:eight Safeguarding in Pastoral Ministry course. This handbook is designed to accompany the webinar and contains the case scenarios, discussion questions and polls we will be using in the webinar as well as further information about relevant topics.

Safeguarding in Pastoral Ministry is a four UK nations friendly course. It is for everyone at every level of pastoral ministry in a faith setting. The case studies and references for the course are based in Christian contexts. If you are involved in pastoral ministry in another faith or community context then you are so welcome and the principles of safeguarding ourselves and others apply in all communities. However, you may need to do some additional contextualisation to get the most from this training; there will be space to do this during activities and discussions within the webinar.

In this course we will examine the safeguarding implications of pastoral ministry and equip you to minister in ways that are safe for you and for others. Journeying alongside people and attending to their practical and spiritual needs is an integral part of serving in any faith community. To do so safely requires an awareness of the inherent risks, for others and ourselves, and taking practical steps to reduce them.

We are looking forward to supporting you as you safeguard those you work with through your Safeguarding in Pastoral Ministry processes.

The Thirtyone:eight team

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# Questions and Exercises in the webinar

Throughout the webinar there will be opportunities to have discussions, share knowledge and participate in activities to apply our learning in context. These are included here for reference only. There is no need to work through anything in advance.

## Introduction

**Discussion:** Are there any other Bible verses, words from other sacred texts, or elements of your faith that underpin your understanding of pastoral ministry? How do these interact with safeguarding?

## Module 1: People

**Poll: What does pastoral ministry involve for you?**

Think about the role that has brought you to training today:

- I am working with: Children / young people / adults
- My role is: full time / part time
- My role is: paid / voluntary
- I minister: in the place where our community meets / in my own home / in others' homes / on the street / in institutions / in other places of work / on international mission / other – please say
- My role involves: praying with and for people / shopping / companionship / support / mentoring / providing transport / teaching and preaching / counselling / sharing communion / other - please say

**Breakout rooms:** What are the vulnerabilities inherent in pastoral ministry for us and those to whom we are ministering?

**Discussion:** What forms of harm and abuse are you aware of in relation to children? What additional forms of harm and abuse are you aware of in relation to adults?

**Consider the following case scenario:** Mrs Di Costa is in her mid-eighties and has been a member of your community for almost 20 years. She comes to community gatherings most weeks with a couple who live near her.

A few months ago, this couple spoke to Maria, the Pastoral Team leader, to say they were a bit worried about Mrs Di Costa. Her house used to be really neat and tidy, but this had changed. Also, she was becoming 'a bit forgetful and less steady on her feet'. They each take her by the arm now to get her to the car.

Since then, Maria has been visiting Mrs Di Costa every other day to help around the house. She gave Mrs Di Costa her phone number and said to call anytime she needs anything, sometimes she'll get some shopping or cook a meal too.

Over the last month, Mrs Di Costa has started to call multiple times a day saying she needs help, that she can't find things round the house or remember how to do certain tasks. If Maria doesn't answer, Mrs Di Costa will keep ringing so Maria often has 20-30 missed calls when she checks her phone.

- 1. Who is at risk here?**
- 2. What could have been done differently?**
- 3. How would this reduce risk of harm?**

## **Module 2: Power**

**Pause and consider:** Where do you hold power in your role?

**Discussion:** What are the risks in these strengths? How can the risks be reduced?

1. Connor is a lead pastor. He is an inspiring preacher. His sermons are often passionate and personal. Attendance at his church has increased since he started leading, particularly among the local student population.

2. Kwasi is a member of the pastoral team. He is a natural host. He's a great cook and often invites people over for dinner, particularly those new to your community. He makes people feel welcome and at ease.

3. Grace is a hospital chaplain and part of the prayer team in her local community outreach. She is an amazing listener. Her own life hasn't been easy, and she has a non-judgmental empathy that people are drawn to.

4. Orlaith is a part-time paid administrator for your organisation and a volunteer member of the pastoral team. She is great organiser, practical and efficient. She is generous with her time, is on every committee and often runs community outreach events. Nobody knows what you would do without her!

5. Carmel is part of the worship team. She is passionate about prayer and listening to God. She often shares pictures or words with individuals and the wider church in worship gatherings.

**Reflection:** What are your own strengths / gifts? What are the risks? How can these be reduced so your strengths are a blessing to be celebrated?

**Pause and consider:** How could you use power well in your role?

## Module 3: Processes

**Consider the following case scenario:** A parent of one of your young people comes to talk to you. They are upset and angry. Their 16-year-old was tearful and withdrawn after last Sunday's worship service and eventually told their parent that they won't be coming to church anymore. They're not a good enough Christian and God couldn't love someone with so little faith.

After talking more, the parent found out that their child had gone to the prayer room after the main service to pray with someone about worries over their upcoming exams and some difficult relationships at school. The adult they spoke to told them the only relationship that should matter is their relationship with God, that should be enough to sustain them in everything. They also said that anxiety is a sign they don't trust God enough. That the Bible says 'do not be anxious about anything' so they should be obedient to this command.

The adult then stood up, put both hands on the child's head and prayed for God to forgive their sin and live a life worthy of His love.

1. **What are your concerns here?**
2. **What are your safeguarding responsibilities?**
3. **What processes would make this situation safer?**

**Discussion:** What should be included in a safeguarding record?

## Module 4: Places

**Pause and consider:** Where does your pastoral ministry take place?

**Think about your context:** What are the safeguarding risks where you minister? How could you reduce them? Consider- location, groups you are working with, support and accountability, personal safety, training needed etc.

**Discussion:** In the following situations, what are the safeguarding risks and how can they be reduced?

1. Blessing regularly visits four housebound members of her community in their own homes, and occasionally others who would like support for a variety of reasons, such as bereavement, ill health or a family emergency.
2. Rita visits two local care homes every week and is involved in prison chaplaincy on a monthly basis.
3. Clarence is a street pastor. He takes teams of volunteers into the city centre every Friday and Saturday night to support people who are homeless and those coming out of pubs and clubs.
4. Louise and Pasha host a small group in their home every fortnight. They have two children in primary school and Pasha's mum also lives with them.
5. Alf drives older members of his community to weekly gatherings, senior lunch club and occasionally to medical appointments.
6. Alain is a youth pastor. He runs a weekly evening 'hang-out' in the church hall, facilitates Youth Alpha once a year and wants to start one-to-one mentoring / discipleship next term.
7. Donna volunteers at the foodbank hosted at her church as part of the team welcoming guests and offering signposting and pastoral support.
8. Meilin is a hospital chaplain working across three hospitals in her city. She ministers to patients, families and staff in a variety of different circumstances.
9. Garth works for an organisation taking young people aged 18-25 from the UK on short term mission trips to refugee camps in Europe.
10. Jamilla is a pastor at a new church plant on the estate where she grew up. As well as Sunday worship gatherings she is part of a variety of weekly outreach events in the community.

**Discussion:** What sustains you when you are weary? How do you rest and restore?

### **Ministering Safely: Reflection**

In all contexts, ask yourself these questions:

1. Do I feel safe? Is the level of vulnerability comfortable for me? What would need to change for me to feel differently? More support? Clearer procedures? More training? Or would nothing make a difference? Who can I talk to about this?
2. Would I be happy to ask somebody else to do this?
3. Who is supporting me? Who am I accountable to? Who do I go to with questions or concerns?
4. Am I sufficiently equipped? Physically (e.g. phone for lone working, right insurance for driving etc.); intellectually (e.g. knowing what is expected, sufficient training etc.); emotionally (e.g. support, capacity and rest); spiritually (e.g. own relationship with God, pastoral support).



## Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk in Pastoral Ministry

'Safeguarding' refers to the measures we take to protect people from all harm and abuse, and the creation of healthy, safer cultures that enable people to thrive. We have particular safeguarding responsibilities, laid out in law, towards vulnerable groups – children, young people and adults at risk of harm. As organisations, we also have a duty to safeguard our staff and volunteers- so safeguarding involves keeping ourselves and our teams safe too.

Across the four nations of the UK, safeguarding legislation defines various types of harm and abuse that children and adults can experience. If our organisation becomes aware that someone is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing, one of these forms of harm- we have a responsibility to refer this concern to statutory agencies who can act to protect the person. We also have a responsibility to work in ways that mean people aren't exposed to harm and abuse through their involvement with us.

What this means for us as we work in pastoral ministry is that we need to pass on ANY concerns we have about someone's safety and wellbeing to our safeguarding lead so they can keep records and liaise with statutory agencies as necessary. We also need to understand how to work in safe ways.

## Babies, Children and Young People

Across the UK, legislation names four\* categories of harm and abuse in relation to children and young people. These are sometimes referred to by the acronym 'PENS'.

P= **Physical abuse**: harm to someone's body.

E= **Emotional abuse**: persistent harm to someone's mind and wellbeing.

N= **Neglect**: persistent failure to meet someone's basic needs or keep them safe.

S= **Sexual abuse**: Sexual harm of a child, physical or otherwise.

If something you encounter in your ministry with children, young people and families means you are worried that someone is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing, one of these forms of harm- tell your safeguarding lead. You might have indicators through things you see, things you are told, or things you notice – such as a change in behaviour, change in emotional state, change in relationships etc.

## Adults at Risk

Safeguarding adults is a bit more complicated than safeguarding children. We have a safeguarding duty towards children simply because of their age. Not all adults are covered by safeguarding legislation in the same way; we also often need an adult's consent to refer a safeguarding concern about them outside of our organisation.

Statutory agencies (like police and social care services) have a safeguarding duty towards adults who are at risk of harm and who are unable or less able to safeguard themselves due to increased vulnerability. In England, Scotland and Wales increased vulnerability is attributed to personal characteristics or needs for care and support, perhaps due to physical disability, learning disability or illness. In Northern Ireland, the recognition of increased vulnerability is broader -including life circumstances as well as personal characteristics.

## Adults at Risk (continued)

In our pastoral ministry, we may have safeguarding concerns about adults who fit the definition above and also those who don't. It's important to pass on ALL concerns to your Safeguarding Lead, who will determine next steps and ensure your organisation is fulfilling its safeguarding responsibilities. As well as physical, emotional, neglect and sexual abuse, there are additional categories of harm and abuse named in legislation related to adults. Across the UK, the way these are named in legislation is slightly different, but all nations acknowledge these are things that adults can experience but shouldn't have to. The below definitions are short summaries. For more detailed information as well as signs and indicators, see this document from the Social Care Institute of Excellence: [Types and indicators of abuse: Safeguarding adults - SCIE](#). It is based on how types of harm and abuse are categorised in The Care Act 2014, which applies to England, but these types of harm and abuse are covered by safeguarding law across the UK.

**Financial harm and abuse:** Harm in terms of money or property.

**Modern slavery:** Forcing someone to work without rights.

**Exploitation:** Taking advantage of another person and abusing power and control over them for personal gain.

**Domestic abuse:** Control, coercion and other forms of harm by those in close relationship.

**Self-neglect:** Someone not keeping themselves safe and well.

**Discriminatory harm and abuse:** Harassment or unfair treatment based on race, gender, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

**Institutional harm and abuse:** Harm through poor care or unsafe organisational structures in an institution or care received in someone's own home.

## Adults at Risk (continued)

Just as with children, if something you encounter in your ministry with adults means you are worried that someone is experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing, one of these forms of harm- tell your safeguarding lead. Again, you might have indicators through things you see, things you are told, or things you notice – such as a change in behaviour, change in emotional state, change in appearance, change in financial capability, change in relationships etc.

## Our safeguarding responsibilities

As pastoral ministers, you will often meet people at times of vulnerability, and you are very likely to encounter safeguarding concerns. Acknowledging that someone we know and care for may be experiencing harm or abuse can be difficult. It can be tempting to think of other explanations for the things we notice; we may worry about being wrong or causing trouble for someone. This is natural. Safeguarding involves dealing with uncertainty and this isn't easy or comfortable. However, everyone has the right to be safe and our safeguarding responsibility is to:

**Recognise** when someone may be at risk of harm.

**Respond** well to the person.

**Record** our concern.

**Report** our concern to the Safeguarding Lead.

**Reflect** on anything we can learn from this experience to make our places safer for all.

# Responding well to a disclosure of abuse

In your role as a pastoral minister, you may be the person that somebody chooses to tell about their experience of harm or abuse. In safeguarding, this is sometimes called 'receiving a disclosure of abuse'. The way we respond to this person and our subsequent actions can have a powerful impact. In the moment, this experience can feel quite overwhelming, so it is helpful to identify some simple 'dos and don'ts' ahead of time so we are well prepared.

## Do

- Show you are present with the person through body language, eye contact and by minimising distractions.
- Listen actively – give the person time to speak, show you are listening through your responses, reflect back what you have understood to avoid misinterpretation.
- Stay calm. You might not feel calm, but if you can convey a calm demeanour then the person can talk without worrying about how what they are saying is affecting you.
- Reassure and reaffirm. Disclosing abuse is a vulnerable experience. Reassure the person that they were right to talk about it, reaffirm that they are valuable and have a right to be safe.
- Accept without judgement. You might have a whole range of feelings about what a person tells you but in that moment it's important not to convey shock, blame or disbelief as this can have the effect of silencing someone.
- Pass on the disclosure to your Safeguarding Lead. As soon as possible after the conversation, make a written record and pass this to your safeguarding lead within 24 hours. If someone is at immediate risk of significant harm, call the emergency services.
- Pass on all disclosures of harm and abuse. You may have doubts about the person's account, it may be an allegation against someone you like and respect, you may feel it is not that serious, or a variety of other things that make us hesitate. However, it is not our role to make judgements about what we've heard but to pass on the disclosure so that the safeguarding process can be followed through – everyone has a right to be safe.

# Responding well to a disclosure of abuse

## Don't

- Promise to keep what you have been told a secret. Confidentiality is important and you can reassure the person that you won't tell everyone in the community, but be honest about the safeguarding process. Explain that you need to pass information on to the safeguarding lead to make sure everyone is kept safe – this is also a legal duty for our organisation.
- Approach the alleged perpetrator. If someone discloses that they experienced abuse from someone else in your community, it can be tempting to go and ask this person for their side of the story- especially if they are someone we like and respect. However, it is really important that we don't do this as it could increase risk of harm and compromise any official investigation that may happen.
- Excuse, minimise or blame. Sometimes our instinct is to give reasons for someone's behaviour, or downplay what a person has experienced. However, rather than making a person feel better, this can feel dismissive and a person can end up feeling they shouldn't have come forward, or even that they are to blame for what happened.
- Try to investigate. This is not our role. We need to avoid asking leading questions and simply record what someone has told us in their own words.
- Try to 'solve' the person's situation by yourself. Again, this is not our role, and we may put the person or ourselves at risk by trying to support beyond our capacity. Find out what the person would like to happen, talk to your safeguarding lead and perhaps signpost to specialist sources of support too.

# Safeguarding Records

- Make a record whenever you are concerned if someone isn't safe, or you're concerned for their wellbeing.
- A safeguarding record should answer the questions: who, what, where and when. Who is the concern about and is anyone else involved? What is your concern? Where did this happen? When did this happen? Also record if you have passed this concern on to anyone else, for example social care services or police.
- Make records of each new concern or incident, don't worry about repeating yourself, we need to see patterns emerge.
- Don't wait to be told, record signs and indicators - you may think that if something was really wrong, then the person you are ministering to would just tell you. However, there are many reasons why a person may not tell, for example, fear, pride, shame, or worry about what will happen next.
- Make your record as soon as possible and pass to safeguarding lead within 24 hours.
- Don't keep safeguarding records at home or leave them on a desk in a shared office.
- Your organisation may have a specific template or online form for recording concerns. Check this with your safeguarding lead ahead of time.
- Are there other records that you keep as part of your role? Make sure safeguarding records are kept separately from general visiting records or entries in a shared book, for example.



## Referring concerns

- If there is immediate risk of significant harm, call 999.
- If you are worried about someone's safety and wellbeing, talk to your safeguarding lead as soon as possible (certainly within 24 hours).
- You may be worried about breaking the confidences of the person who has talked to you. This is natural. However, a person's safety and wellbeing is paramount and you have a responsibility in your role to pass on concerns. If you're not sure it's safeguarding, you can always talk to the lead about a situation without naming the person in the first instance.
- If your safeguarding lead isn't available, check your policy for who to contact in these circumstances.
- If you are visiting someone in an institution, you may also need to talk to the institution's safeguarding lead too.
- Check with your safeguarding lead before sharing information more widely.

## Referring concerns (continued)

- Referrals to statutory agencies will usually go via your safeguarding lead. In brief, organisations have a responsibility to pass on any concerns that a child may be experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, abuse and neglect. In Northern Ireland, it is a criminal offence in itself not to pass on information about some serious crimes. For adults in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, we usually need the adult's consent to refer to outside agencies but there are exceptions to this, so always get advice from your safeguarding lead.
- If you don't feel that your concern has been acted upon and a person is still at risk of harm, follow the escalation process in your safeguarding policy – this may involve bringing the concern to a regional lead or external body. All organisations should also have a whistleblowing policy that lays out the process and acknowledges the rights of people to raise a concern that their organisation may be causing harm by its action or inaction.

In the past, and sometimes still today, there has been a feeling among faith groups that they need to deal with disclosures of abuse and other safeguarding concerns 'in house'.

However, not only do we have a legal duty to refer to the agencies with the expertise and remit to protect and respond, we want to create safe cultures where we are transparent and accountable and honour the bravery of victim-survivors by being honest and open, rather than trying to silence them or hide when things go wrong.

Reputation is of lesser concern than people's safety, but even from the point of view of reputation, showing ourselves to be open, honest and accountable and bringing things into the light is better than operating with secrecy behind closed doors.



## Considerations for lead pastors and ministers

This course is designed to equip people at all levels of pastoral ministry and the discussions and scenarios in the webinar reflect this. However, when you are in a position of key leadership in a faith community, there are some aspects of the course content that are particularly relevant for you.

### Position of Trust

The term 'Position of Trust' has a legal and a general meaning. In legal terms, 'Position of Trust' refers to certain roles and settings where an adult has regular and direct contact with children. It's against the law for someone in a Position of Trust to engage in sexual activity with a child in their care, even if that child is over the age of consent (16 or over). Examples of Positions of Trust include: teachers, care workers, youth justice workers, social workers and doctors. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland changes to the law made in 2022 extend the definition to include faith group leaders and sports coaches.

## Position of Trust (continued)

In general terms, position of trust refers to a perceived trustworthiness based on association with a trusted organisation or holding a position of status. As a pastor or minister, you might be perceived as trustworthy because of the church you represent and the role you hold. You are a faith leader, and, for some people, this means you must be a good and trustworthy person. It can go even further than this. For some, the fact that you are a faith leader means that God has called or appointed you. This can result in people being less likely to challenge or question you, and your words having added weight. It is important to be aware of this perception as, even if you do not hold to it or seek to cultivate it, it will be affecting how some people in your community relate to you, your words and actions.

## Power

Your position within your community also comes with elements of power. Whether you have sought it or not, you hold power in your role. As a pastor or minister you can, to a greater or lesser extent, be seen to represent God (or at least the church) to people in your community. The things you do and say, the way you react, the things you don't do and the things you stay silent about will have an impact on people and send a message beyond your status as an individual. This may feel uncomfortable, but it is something to acknowledge and take seriously.

What this means for you practically is an extra moment of consideration and intentionality with your words and actions in your faith community, and building safe and trusted relationships with people who can keep you accountable. For example, a throwaway suggestion or request may be taken seriously and given priority because of who you are. What would you need to do or say to ensure it is given only the weight you intend and not more? Demonstrating humility, inviting questions and challenge and acting on these, and empowering others to lead in different areas are important facets of managing power well.

## Power (continued)

These considerations are important in all aspects of community life, but perhaps especially so when they relate to people's spiritual safety and their relationship with God. In your role, you have the privilege of pointing people to Jesus. How can you remove any barriers there might be to meeting Him? For example, how might your words or actions be received by someone who has experienced trauma, is recently bereaved, or is experiencing mental health crisis?

Power is not only something for us to manage and mitigate; we can also be proactive and use the power entrusted to us for the good of others. In the webinar, we will share ideas of how we might use power well. For example, through advocacy, empowering others, speaking out for justice and creating safer cultures. Take some time to reflect on how you can use power well in your own community.

## Modelling Safe Behaviours

Linked with power is the acknowledgement that, as leaders, you have a key role in setting the tone for the culture and behaviours in your community. People will notice the way you do things, the way you communicate, the way you interact with others.

If you model safe, healthy behaviours this will have a positive impact. For example, if you ensure you work within your capacity (of time and expertise), set clear boundaries and stick to them, people will feel empowered to do the same and this builds a safer, healthier culture.



## Relevant laws and guidance across the four UK nations

Safeguarding practice is usually based on the laws made by one of the 4 UK Governments (Westminster, Holyrood, Stormont and the Senedd). You do not need to memorise or have a deep understanding of these pieces of legislation, it's enough to have an awareness that there is a legal framework that informs how we safeguard those to whom we minister, ourselves, our volunteers and employees.

For those interested in the details, some key pieces of legislation related to Safeguarding in Pastoral Ministry for each UK nation are listed below. The full legislation documents are available online by searching the name and date given here.

UK Wide Legislation
Human Rights Act 1998
European Convention on Human Rights 1953
UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights 19548

# UK law and guidance (continued)

## Vulnerable groups laws:

England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) England (updated 2026)	Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2017 (updated 2024)	National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 (updated 2023)	Working Together to Safeguard People vol 1- 6
Children Act 1989 and 2004	The Children (NI) Order 1995	Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and 2020	Children Act 1989
The Care Act 2014	Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership Key Documents (2015)	Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 and Code of Practice (2014 updated in 2022)	Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (particularly Part 7)
Mental Capacity Act 2005	Mental Capacity Act (Northern Ireland) 2016	Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000	Mental Capacity Act 2005
Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006	Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007	Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007  Police Act 1997 (as amended)	Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

## UK law and guidance (continued)

### Position of Trust laws:

England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
'Position of trust' offences within ss.16 – 19 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 now include situations where certain activities take place in a sport or religion (as amended by the Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts Act, 2022).	Section 5 of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 known as 'Abuse of Position of Trust'	'Positions of trust' law in Scotland remains as originally set out in the Sexual Offences Act (2009), which does not cover religious or sports settings.	'Position of trust' offences within ss.16 – 19 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 now include situations where certain activities take place in a sport or religion (as amended by the Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts Act, 2022).

### Equal opportunities laws:

England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
Equality Act 2010	Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and others	Equality Act 2010	Equality Act 2010

### Rehabilitation of offenders laws:

England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974	Rehabilitation of Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1978	Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974	Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974



## Safer Recruitment and Regulated Roles and Activity

One of the key safeguarding responsibilities that our organisations have is ensuring that only safe and suitable people have access to vulnerable groups through our work. Safer recruitment is a vital part of this.

Safer recruitment refers to the process we use to bring someone into a role in our community. It will look and feel very different depending on the type of role and level of formality, but the same important steps will be present every time. Safer recruitment is relevant to your pastoral ministry because you should have undergone this process yourself and you may also be involved in safely recruiting others.

In our relational communities, where we are often friends and family, the idea of safer recruitment can seem overly formal or even unnecessary. However, it doesn't need to be overly formal, and it is essential.

## Safer Recruitment (continued)

It is a sad fact that those who wish to abuse will often target churches, charities and faith communities as they see them as an easy way to gain access to vulnerable people. Perpetrators will seek positions of trust and build positive relationships in order to have the opportunity to abuse. A Charity Commission Task Force analysis of concerns brought to the regulators found that staff were the perpetrators of 65% of serious safeguarding concerns. This is a sobering statistic. Even moving away from targeted abuse, many of us can think of times when painful and difficult situations occurred because someone was given a role for which they were ill-equipped or unsuitable.

A robust safer recruitment process will include these steps:

**Expression of interest:** A written expression of why someone would like to be involved in a particular area of ministry, what they can bring to it and any support they would need. If writing is a barrier, this can be done verbally, and notes made by someone else.

**Role profile:** Clear communication of what the role involves so someone can decide if they have the time, skills, capacity and desire to do it.

**'Interview':** For informal processes, this can be coffee and conversation with a team-leader, but it's important to have the opportunity to explore the role further and allow the person to ask questions.

**Checks:** This may involve a criminal record check (though not all roles are eligible for this), references, right to work checks etc. to ensure there is nothing that would prevent someone taking on the role.

**Support and supervision:** Nobody should be given a role then left to get on with it without support! All volunteers and staff should have regular check-ins with someone so they can be supported, ask questions and raise concerns.

## Safer Recruitment (continued)

If your role involves recruiting others, we have a [Safer Recruitment](#) training course available where you can explore these steps further in relation to your organisation.

In pastoral ministry, we can often find people willing to 'just help out' but don't want to define themselves as having a role or commit to a rota. We can all help and support each other in our communities, and this is good and right, we can pray for each other, make friends and visit each other's homes. However, when someone is doing these things on behalf of your organisation (and especially when they have access to vulnerable groups because of this association) they have a role and should be safely recruited. This is for the benefit and safety of vulnerable groups, the person themselves and for your organisation.

## Regulated Roles and Activity

There are some activities with vulnerable groups that can legally only be carried out by someone with a certain level of criminal record check. This is called 'Regulated Activity', or a 'Regulated Role' in Scotland. There are some people who will never be able to be involved in these activities or to hold these roles because of the risk they pose to children or adults at risk of harm. People in this position will be on a 'barred list'\*. It is against the law for organisations to allow someone known to be on a barred list to work or volunteer in Regulated Activity or take on a Regulated Role. It is also a criminal offence for someone on a barred list to apply for a Regulated Role or any role that involves Regulated Activity.

\*For England, Wales and Northern Ireland, barred lists are held by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). In Scotland, the lists are held by Disclosure Scotland and Regulated Roles are managed through the PVG scheme.

## Regulated Roles and Activity (continued)

Regulated Roles and Activity is relevant to pastoral ministry because it is important to define whether a particular pastoral ministry role is a Regulated Role or involves Regulated Activity, or not. If we don't do this there may be harm to vulnerable people, a person may end up inadvertently committing a criminal offence because they apply for a role they are barred from, and we may end up working outside the boundaries of our role without realising it.

Examples of Regulated Activities / Roles include:

- Assisting with cash, paying bills or shopping
- Transporting someone or accompanying them to hospital, medical appointments or social work services
- Helping with washing, feeding, dressing or toileting

The examples above are included as they can sometimes form part of some pastoral ministry roles. However, this is deliberately not an exhaustive list. It is important to get specialist advice from your umbrella / registered body on the level of criminal record check required for a particular role.

If you are working in pastoral ministry in Scotland, you can find a list of Regulated Roles [here](#) or contact [Disclosure Scotland](#) or [Volunteer Scotland](#) for advice.

Considerations around Regulated Roles and Regulated Activity is one of the reasons why having clear role profiles for pastoral ministry roles is so important. If you are not sure about your own role, talk to your Safeguarding Lead.

# Specific Considerations in Pastoral Ministry

This next part of the handbook contains a number of appendices that relate to specific considerations that may form part of your pastoral ministry.

These are designed to give some introductory advice and guidance on a particular subject. Each appendix ends with some related signposting links for further information. There is no obligation to read through every section! This is an ongoing support tool that you can refer to as and when you need it.

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## Appendix 1: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Trauma

When we are working in pastoral ministry, we are very likely to encounter people who have experienced abuse and trauma. The impact of trauma is complex, and it can make aspects of daily life more challenging. It also means that well-intentioned support that doesn't take account of this impact may not feel safe or have the restorative effect we hope it will.

The information here is just a brief introduction to the subject of adversity experienced in childhood and trauma experienced at any time of life. There is a separate course available on [Supporting Victim-Survivors](#) if you would like to explore this in much more detail. There are also some signposting links at the end of this appendix.

### Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful experiences that occur during childhood. They include experiences that directly harm a child (for example, abuse and neglect) and those that affect the environment in which they live (for example, parental substance misuse). Around half of all adults in the UK have experienced at least 1 ACE and between 9 – 15% have experienced 4 or more.

## ACEs (continued)

Experiencing extreme stress in childhood can change how your body and brain develop. The fight or flight hormones that are usually released as a temporary survival response are in continual use, which has a toxic effect on a growing brain and body. Research shows that this can have a negative impact across the course of someone's life including on physical health, emotional and mental health, social outcomes, executive functions and forming relationships. The impact of ACEs often increases when more are experienced.

When we have an awareness of ACEs, we can respond with empathy and seek support when we recognise the impact in ourselves or someone else. It is important to say that ACEs do not define anyone, they are part of someone's life but not the whole story. The research into ACEs identifies that the impact can be significantly reduced through positive factors that build resilience. In pastoral ministry, we have the opportunity to be one of these positive factors by providing practical and emotional support, creating trustworthy relationships, building social and community links etc.

## Trauma

The UK Trauma Council describes Trauma in this way:

“Trauma refers to the way that some distressing events are so extreme or intense that they overwhelm a person's ability to cope, resulting in lasting negative impact.”

<https://uktraumacouncil.org/trauma/trauma>

A 2014 UK wide study by Bellis et al indicated that 47% of adults had experienced at least one ACE, with 9% experiencing four or more. A survey of adults in Scotland in 2020 indicated that 71% had experienced at least one, 15% had experienced four or more, the ACE Hub Wales states that 50% of adults in Wales experienced at least one, 14% four or more.

## Trauma (continued)

The charity '[Mind](#)' further explains that:

“What's traumatic is personal. Other people can't know how you feel about your own experiences or if they're traumatic for you. You might have similar experiences to someone else, but be affected differently or for longer.”

When we feel stressed or threatened, our bodies release hormones to prepare us to respond to danger. These are automatic responses that we have no control over. If we experience trauma, automatic reactions can continue long after the event itself is over. For example, if we're in a situation that reminds us of the trauma (even when no physical danger is present) we might respond in a way that we can't control. Trauma responses can be emotional, physical and behavioural.

Having an awareness of trauma is helpful for pastoral ministry as it can help us understand the challenges that someone we are supporting may be facing. It can also help us identify in ourselves things that we may struggle with when supporting others, and to seek our own support for that.

## Principles for supporting someone who has experienced trauma

Every person who has experienced trauma is unique and there is not a 'one size fits all' approach to supporting someone with trauma experience. The below are some simple principles which we can apply to all our support and may be particularly helpful if someone has experienced trauma:

- Find out what the person needs to feel safe in your support. This could be in terms of a preferred way to communicate, place to meet or pattern of interaction.
- Build trust through reliability and consistency.
- Listen well and collaborate with the person; don't assume we know best what they need.

*Continued on next page*

## Principles for supporting (continued)

- Avoid re-traumatising: Being retraumatised means being mentally taken back to a place of pain and trauma and experiencing its effects again. It is not always possible to predict what will retraumatise ourselves or somebody else. However, we can avoid things like asking someone to recount a traumatic event, asking them to return to a place where a traumatic event happened, exposing them to things they've told us they struggle with, or indicating we don't believe their account of what happened to them.
- Give them space and time to talk or not and be guided by them as to what our support involves.
- Empower the person by recognising their agency and enabling them to make choices about their lives- our support should not feel controlling.

## Further information:

[Mind](#): Clear and helpful information about trauma including a wide range of signposting for support.

[UK Trauma Council](#): Research and resources focused on supporting those working with children and young people who have experienced trauma. Lots of information and resources about supporting refugees and asylum seekers and others who have experienced conflict.

[Young Minds](#): Information and Resources about trauma and adversity and how they can affect young people.

[ACE Hub Wales](#)

[Scottish Government ACEs Policy Information](#)

[Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland ACEs Information](#)

[Free online ACES Training](#)



## Appendix 2: Bereavement

Many of us in pastoral ministry will be involved in supporting people at times of bereavement. This is a weighty privilege. There is much that could be said on this topic, but we will focus on the intersections with safeguarding.

At times of bereavement, we can become more vulnerable. For adults, this doesn't necessarily mean that a person becomes an 'adult at risk' as defined in safeguarding legislation, but it does mean that we can have a caring curiosity towards that person – to be more alert to signs and indicators that a person might not be safe and well. Children are always deemed to be vulnerable because of their age and times of bereavement can increase this vulnerability.

Talk to your safeguarding lead if a person you are supporting:

- Is talking about ending their own life (see appendix and signposting on suicide, seek emergency help as necessary)
- Is not eating, drinking, or taking the medication they need to stay well.
- Is self-harming or engaging in risky behaviours that might put them in danger.

*Continued on next page*

## Bereavement (continued)

- Is in extreme emotional distress to the extent you are worried about their safety or mental wellbeing. This can be hard to define as bereavement can be devastating and we all grieve differently. Similarly, good mental health does not mean feeling happy all the time, rather it's that our emotions fit our circumstances – so feeling extremely upset at times of bereavement is natural. However, if you are worried about someone, trust your instincts and talk to your safeguarding lead.
- Is being asked to make life-changing decisions that they do not have the mental capacity to make – for example, being pressured by a relative to move house.
- Is experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, any form of harm or abuse.
- Is becoming isolated or withdrawn for an extended period of time.
- If you have any other concerns about their safety and wellbeing.

There are also some simple principles we can apply to support someone safely at times of bereavement.

- Ask what support they would like; don't assume we know.
- Listen actively and let them talk at their own pace – don't rush someone, press for details, or share our own bereavement stories unless they ask.
- Start with practical support and companionship, rather than theology or meaning-making.
- Take our lead from them in terms of prayer and scripture. Praying for someone in our own time is always a good thing; praying with them should be as and when they are ready, without us driving it. Similarly, a Bible passage that we find helpful may not be something a bereaved person is ready to hear. Letting them know we are willing to explore the Bible with them whenever they might find this helpful would be a safer way to support them.
- Maintain clear boundaries. This doesn't mean being cold and clinical, but it does mean supporting in ways that are safe, appropriate and predictable. We don't want to reach beyond what feels ok for either us or the person we are supporting, or support beyond what is sustainable and within our capacity.
- Signpost to specialist support – this could be a local support group, a national organisation, or a counselling service.

## Bereavement (continued)

### Further information:

[What is bereavement? - Mind](#)

[Get help with grief after bereavement or loss - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Home - Cruse Bereavement Support](#)

[Sue Ryder's Online Bereavement Support | Sue Ryder](#)

[Bereavement support after the death of a baby or child - The Lullaby Trust](#)

[Child Bereavement UK](#)



## Appendix 3: Care Experienced Children

The term 'care-experienced' refers to anyone who has been or is currently in care or from a looked-after background at any stage in their life, no matter how short.

It is very likely that you have care-experienced people within your community, and maybe care is part of your life and that of your family. Part of your pastoral ministry may involve working directly with care-experienced people and an understanding of what their experience involves is helpful.

Adoption UK explains:

“Making the move to a new home and a new family is a life-changing and traumatic experience for a child, however well managed.”\*

This awareness doesn't mean we should assume that anyone who has experienced care wants or needs our support. Rather, it enables us to recognise that experience of care is complex, that it can make some aspects of life challenging for some people, and this encourages us to intentionally create safe and trustworthy connections. There is support, signposting and further information below to help us apply this to our pastoral ministry.

## Care Experienced Children (continued)

There has been a recent focus in UK national policies and legislation on recognising challenges faced by care-experienced children and young people, aiming to remove unnecessary barriers and enabling them to thrive. Notably, [The Promise](#) in Scotland, which came out of the Independent Care Review, states: “You will grow up loved, safe and respected. And by 2030, that promise must be kept.”

## Support and Signposting

[Adoption UK Charity](#) Information and support for adopted people, adopters and professionals.

[Young people leaving care | Barnardo's \(barnardos.org.uk\)](#) Information and support for young people leaving care.

[Homepage - Kinship - The kinship care charity](#) Information about kinship care and support for kinship carers.

[Leaving care - rights4children](#) Information about your rights and available support for young people leaving care.

[What we do | Young Futures CIC | Supporting young people leaving care](#) Support for young people leaving care.

## Further information:

[Care experienced children and young people's mental health | Iriss](#)

[Looked after children | NSPCC Learning](#)

[Looked-after children and young people \(nice.org.uk\)](#)

[Looked after children | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

[Find out more about what we're doing to help... | Social Care Wales](#)



## Appendix 4: Domestic Abuse

UK law defines domestic abuse as controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or other abuse by family members, intimate partners or former partners. It applies to anyone aged 16 or over of any gender or sexuality. The law also recognises that children who live in a household where domestic abuse is taking place are experiencing emotional harm and we have a safeguarding duty towards those children. If you become aware that someone is experiencing, or may be experiencing, domestic abuse – talk to your Safeguarding Lead.

### Signs and Indicators

You might recognise domestic abuse by seeing physical signs of harm, noticing someone is becoming withdrawn, that they are becoming isolated from family and friends, having their movements monitored or restricted. You might hear someone being belittled or humiliated by someone else, notice changes in their financial situation or any other changes in their appearance, emotional state or behaviour. Someone you are supporting might tell you about what they are experiencing, or you might witness concerning incidents when you visit their home.

# Domestic abuse (continued)

## Supporting Victim-Survivors

The charity 'Restored' supports victim-survivors of domestic abuse and works with churches to equip them as they seek to support victim-survivors. They highlight the following principles of safe support: Become informed, listen and believe, prioritise safety, support and respect choices, signpost to relevant agencies and offer practical help. More information available [here](#).

## Domestic abuse and churches

Research by Restored indicates that 1 in 4 churchgoers have experienced domestic abuse in their current relationship. This statistic may be surprising for some, but it shows how important it is that we have an awareness of domestic abuse, create a safe environment and respond well to victim-survivors.

Sadly, sometimes a lack of acknowledgement of domestic abuse or an unhelpful prioritisation of unity over safety, has led some victim-survivors of domestic abuse to feel unsupported by their church communities. The following quote comes from a Thirtyone:eight article about responding well to domestic abuse:

"Churches must ... take an active role in dealing with domestic abuse, just as they would any violent crime. In Ephesians 5 there is a very clear picture of the need for men to love their wives as their own bodies and lay down their lives for them, as Christ does the church. And how does Christ love the church? Not by exerting power and control to manipulate, not through violence or abuse, but through a love marked by giving, invitation and serving."\*

\*Original article no longer available. Related resources:

[https://thirtyoneeight.org/media/g3zh31wr/pack\\_for\\_churches\\_restored.pdf](https://thirtyoneeight.org/media/g3zh31wr/pack_for_churches_restored.pdf) and

<https://thirtyoneeight.org/blogs/how-to-respond-to-domestic-abuse/>

## Domestic abuse (continued)

We can take a positive, proactive stance on supporting victim-survivors of domestic abuse in our pastoral ministry by researching and engaging in training to raise our awareness; by putting up posters with details of domestic abuse services in our buildings or on our websites; by praying for victim-survivors and their families; by finding out about provision locally so we can signpost quickly; by speaking about domestic abuse in public worship services; by listening without judgement and by passing on concerns.

### Further information:

[How to respond to domestic abuse \(thirtyoneeight.org\)](https://thirtyoneeight.org).

[Domestic abuse \(thirtyoneeight.org\)](https://thirtyoneeight.org). (members' resource)

[Home - Restored \(restored-uk.org\)](https://restored-uk.org).

[Homepage - National Domestic Abuse Helpline \(nationaldahelpline.org.uk\)](https://nationaldahelpline.org.uk).

[Men's Advice Line | Respect](https://menadviceline.org)

[Home - Women's Aid \(womensaid.org.uk\)](https://womensaid.org.uk).

[Refuge, the largest UK domestic abuse organisation for women](https://refuge.org.uk)

[ManKind Initiative - Supporting Male Victims of Domestic Abuse](https://mankindinitiative.org)



## Appendix 5: Lone Working

Several forms of pastoral ministry may involve lone working, whether that is in your organisation's building or elsewhere on your organisation's behalf. Transparency and accountability are such important aspects of working safely that where we can avoid lone working, it's best practice to do so. However, lone working is not inherently unsafe. Taking precautions can reduce the risks associated with working alone.

Your organisation is responsible for assessing the risks to you when you work alone, and for taking steps to avoid or control these risks. You also have a responsibility to take care of yourselves and others when you are working alone in pastoral ministry.

Risk assessments should include considerations of your personal safety, the physical environment and any medical needs you have. There should also be plans in place around training, accountability, support, communication and emergency procedures.

## Lone Working (continued)

If you work alone in your context, consider the following questions and talk to your team leader or safeguarding lead if you are unsure about the answers:

- When you are lone working, does someone know where you are and when to expect you back / make contact?
- If you didn't make contact within an agreed time, what would happen?
- What would you do if you felt unsafe while lone working?
- What would you do in an emergency?
- What would happen if you became unwell while lone working?
- What would you do if you had a concern about the person you are visiting?
- Have you had sufficient training to fulfil your role safely?
- Is there any equipment or resources that would make you feel safer (e.g. personal alarm, first aid kit)?

### Further information:

[Lone working \(thirtyoneeight.org\)](https://www.thirtyoneeight.org) (Members' resource)

[Personal Safety & Lone Working training \(suzylamplugh.org\)](https://www.suzylamplugh.org)

[Lone working - HSE](#)



## Appendix 6: Mental (In)capacity

Although it absolutely will not be your responsibility to assess someone's mental capacity as part of your pastoral ministry role, it is helpful to have a general understanding about this topic. Pastoral ministry may involve working with adults who lack mental capacity in certain areas. **If you have a safeguarding concern about an adult and you wonder if they may lack the capacity to make decisions about their safety and wellbeing, it is important to pass this information on to your safeguarding lead so the person can get the necessary support.**

At its simplest, mental capacity is the ability to make a particular decision. Mental incapacity\* or a lack of mental capacity refers to 'an impairment of the functioning of the mind or brain' which prevents a person being able to make decisions for themselves.

The law specifies that if a person with an 'impairment to the function of their mind or brain' cannot do any one of the following, they would lack capacity to make the decision in question:

- Understand the decision
- Retain the information
- Weigh up the information
- Communicate their decision

\*The term mental incapacity is used in Scotland's legislation and practice, terminology in the other 3 UK nations tends to be 'lack of capacity'.

## Mental (In)capacity (continued)

There are Mental Capacity laws in all 4 UK nations to ensure the person can get support to stay central to any safeguarding decisions that affect them.

A lack of capacity can be permanent, temporary or fluctuate. For example, someone with particular learning disabilities may have lifelong difficulties with making certain decisions (although incapacity is always assessed, never just assumed based on a known disability, for example). Whereas another person may usually have capacity to make all decisions for themselves, but if they were knocked over by a car and needed emergency life-saving treatment, they may not have capacity to make a decision at that moment.

### Further information:

[Mental Capacity Act: making decisions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/legislation/mental-capacity-act-2005)

[Mental Capacity Act 2005 - legal information - Mind](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/mental-capacity-act-2005)

[Mental Capacity Act - Social care and support guide - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/healthcare-professionals/mental-capacity-act)

[Mental Capacity Act 2005 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/9)

[Mental Capacity Act | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/mental-capacity-act)

[Adults with Incapacity \(Scotland\) Act 2000: principles - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/adults-with-incapacity-act-2000/principles/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx)



## Appendix 7: Mental Health

Mental ill health is on the increase in the UK. The charity '[Mind](#)' states that: "Mental health problems affect around 1 in 4 people in any given year.\* For many of us in pastoral ministry, supporting people through times (sometimes lifetimes) of mental ill health is a large part of our role. Our own mental health may also be something that requires careful balance.

In terms of safeguarding, one of the most important considerations in this area is around boundaries – both of our time and of our role and expertise. As Christians, we are called to love and serve sacrificially. Sometimes this can mean we feel an obligation to go 'all in' and setting boundaries can make us feel guilty. However, boundaries are essential for safe pastoral relationships – particularly when we are supporting someone with their mental health.

### Boundaries of role and expertise

It is important to note that in pastoral care we are not providing therapeutic or clinical treatment. We know a person in a different way to a clinician, there are areas of a person's life that a clinician can speak into that we shouldn't – for example, advising them on whether or not to take medication. However, our pastoral relationship has a real value – clinical and pastoral relationships have different but complementary roles in someone's overall wellbeing.

## Mental Health (continued)

As pastoral ministers, we have a broader experience of the person – we may know the person socially, we might know their families and be involved in their wider life. We have a personal relationship with them – the way we care is different.

Our mental health is affected through biological, psychological, social and spiritual factors. The biological aspects of mental health may be supported by medication, the psychological aspects through therapy or other specialist support, the social aspects through safe housing, reducing isolation, tackling poverty etc. and the spiritual aspects through opportunities to explore faith, pray with people and be part of a faith community.

Dividing it like this can help us see where our pastoral ministry role may naturally fit in – certainly with spiritual aspects but also with signposting and support with the practical social aspects too. We shouldn't try to replace the biological and psychological support though. One of the ways we can minister in a safe and bounded way is to help people access and navigate the systems where they can get the clinical support they need. We need to care for the whole person, but we can't provide all this care ourselves.

## Boundaries of time

Putting in boundaries in terms of time can feel awkward but it's an important part of creating safe and trusted relationships. We all have different physical, emotional and social capacities so we can't be prescriptive for each other about what the 'right' amount of time to give to a particular pastoral relationship. However, putting in clear boundaries in terms of time means that we can be fully present with a person, rather than drifting or feeling resentful if we feel pushed beyond our capacity.

If someone calls you or asks to meet, it's absolutely ok to say at the beginning- "Sure, I've got 40 minutes just now but if you need a bit longer let's talk on..." or "I can't meet again today, let's catch up next... if that suits you." If someone's in crisis and we can't be with them, we can signpost to crisis support such as Samaritans.

## Mental Health (continued)

If a pastoral situation is very intense, a more planned model of pastoral care may be helpful to keep everyone in the situation well and working within their capacity. It may be helpful to have two or three trusted people that can provide support in predictable ways so that the person or family is well supported, and nobody is working in isolation. As pastoral ministers, we should never be someone's sole source of support in a mental health crisis or situation of long-term need. We want to be one special part of a wider supportive network.

### Further information:

[The Mind and Soul Foundation : Christianity and Mental Health\\*](#)

[Mental Health Foundation | Everyone deserves good mental health](#)

[What are mental health problems? - Mind](#)

[Rethink Mental Illness](#)

[Mental Health UK - Forward Together \(mentalhealth-uk.org\)](#)

[Home | Kintsugi Hope](#)

[Home - Kooth](#) (mental health support for young people)

\*Much of the above section was informed by learning from a Thirtyone:eight staff training session with Dr Chi-Chi Obuaya, consultant psychiatrist, and Dr Kate Middleton of The Mind and Soul Foundation.



## Appendix 8: Poverty in the UK

More than 1 in 5 people in the UK (22%) are living in poverty – 14.4 million people. This includes:

- 8.1 million (or around 2 in 10) working-age adults
- 4.2 million (or nearly 3 in 10) children
- 2.1 million (or around 1 in 6) adults of pensionable age\*

These figures represent people we know, who live in our communities, and maybe ourselves too. Walking alongside people when life is difficult and removing barriers so people can meet their own and their families' basic needs is an important aspect of pastoral ministry. It is a thread of justice that runs throughout the Bible and a priority of God's that Christian communities seek to make our own.

\*Statistics from [UK Poverty 2024: The essential guide to understanding poverty in the UK | Joseph Rowntree Foundation \(jrf.org.uk\)](#) and [Client report: Under the rubble of debt and poverty | CAP UK](#)

## Poverty in the UK (continued)

There are a number of ways that we may be involved in pastoral ministry with people living in poverty, from supporting friends and neighbours to helping in food banks, debt management projects, pantry schemes, warm spaces, crisis centres and a variety of other contexts. The safeguarding considerations for each context will be different and should be covered in codes of conduct and safeguarding procedures.

There are some safeguarding principles we can apply in every context though:

- If you are worried that somebody isn't safe, talk to your Safeguarding Lead.
- If you are worried that children are living in a household where their basic needs aren't being met, talk to your safeguarding lead. This isn't about judgement or blame. We have a safeguarding duty towards children and there may be help and support that the family are entitled to in order to meet the child's needs.
- Don't try to advise and support beyond the boundaries of your own expertise, role or capacity as this can be more harmful than helpful – signpost to specialist support.
- Ask the person what, if any, support they would like rather than assuming that you know.
- If what somebody tells you about their situation causes you to suspect they may have experienced (or be at risk of experiencing) financial abuse, exploitation, modern slavery, domestic abuse or any other form of harm, talk to your safeguarding lead.
- Listen without judgement and have a caring curiosity towards the person's situation so you can build safe relationships based on trust, dignity and respect.

# Poverty in the UK (continued)

## Further information:

[Home | CAP UK Christians Against Poverty – debt help and community groups hosted by churches to tackle the causes of poverty.](#)

[Home - The Trussell Trust Charity supporting a network of foodbanks across the UK and campaigning for change.](#)

[CPAG | We are the trusted voice on child poverty](#)

[Home - Let's End Poverty \(letsendpoverty.co.uk\)](#)

[Your Local Pantry - Church Action on Poverty \(church-poverty.org.uk\)](#)

[Food banks | The Salvation Army](#)

[Get help with the cost of living - Citizens Advice](#)

[Help with the cost of living | Age UK](#)

[Warm Welcome Campaign](#)



## Appendix 9: Risk of Suicide

In the course of your pastoral ministry, you may become concerned that someone is considering taking their own life. This can feel overwhelming, and you are not expected to be able to solve everything for them. However, a calm, compassionate response and connection with specialist support can be lifesaving.

It is important that you feel empowered to ask a person about how they are feeling and have a conversation where you can offer support, rather than avoiding a subject that feels too big. Sometimes we can worry that if we name 'suicide', 'ending your life' or 'hurting yourself' we can put ideas into somebody's head. However, specialist organisations reassure us that this is not the case. Rather, by naming suicide we can give a person the opportunity to talk about it and to express their feelings clearly – to us and for themselves. If we use euphemisms like 'You're not thinking of doing something silly, are you?' we risk minimising their feelings or shutting down the conversation.

If you would like to learn more, the Zero Suicide Alliance offers a free 20-minute training course [here](#).

## Risk of Suicide (continued)

A simple action plan would be:

- Recognise the risk
- Stay calm
- Ask them about it
- Listen to them
- Show them you care
- Get emergency help if required
- Accompany them to safety
- Signpost to specialist support
- 

It is important to say that if somebody you have a pastoral relationship with does die by suicide, this is absolutely not your fault. In that situation, taking care of yourself is vital – recognise the potential for trauma, be compassionate to yourself and seek support.

## Resources for times of crisis:

[SPUK - Suicide Prevention UK](#) A range of support and advice for people in a crisis – contains helpful resources about a wide range of mental health conditions.

[Papyrus UK Suicide Prevention | Prevention of Young Suicide \(papyrus-uk.org\)](#) - support by text, email or phone for those thinking of suicide.

[Samaritans | Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy | Here to listen](#) 24/7 telephone support line

[Shout: the UK's free, confidential and 24/7 mental health text service for crisis support | Shout 85258 \(giveusashout.org\)](#) Free text service

[I feel suicidal | Campaign Against Living Miserably \(CALM\)](#)

[\(thecalmzone.net\)](#) Helpful guides and helpline to help you provide support to those at risk of suicide. They provide a range of suicide prevention training.

[Where to get urgent help for mental health - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Stay Alive App - Grassroots Suicide Prevention \(prevent-suicide.org.uk\)](#)

[Zero Suicide Alliance \(ZSA\)](#) - Resources for suicide prevention, including a free 20-minute online training course.



## Appendix 10: Safeguarding and Prayer

For many of us, prayer is an integral part of our pastoral ministry. It is one of the things that distinguishes our pastoral ministry from other types of community and wellbeing support. It is an incredible privilege to be able to hold space for someone to connect with the God who loves them. The way we pray with and for people will be as unique as we are but, in terms of safeguarding, there are some things we can do (and some things we can avoid) to make our prayer ministry safer for all.

### Safe practice for prayer ministry:

- Pray in an open area where other people are around. You can pray quietly and privately with someone without being behind a closed door.
- Ask the person's permission before you pray with them (and from a parent/carer too if the person is under 18).
- Ask the person's permission before using physical touch (e.g. placing a hand on their shoulder) during prayer, and avoid this altogether with children.
- Think about how you show openness and equity in your body language and physical presence. For example, ensure you are both sitting down rather than standing over someone.

## Safeguarding and Prayer (continued)

- If someone says something that causes you to worry that they or someone else may not be safe, talk to your safeguarding lead.
- Use clear, uncomplicated language and keep prayers simple so a person doesn't feel worried or disempowered by prayers they don't understand.
- Stop if the person becomes distressed.

### Things to avoid in prayer ministry:

- Never pressure someone into receiving prayer.
- Never promise secrecy – explain the boundaries of confidentiality: that you won't tell everyone about their situation, but you have a responsibility to pass on safeguarding concerns to the safeguarding lead.
- Avoid giving specific advice about decisions a person is making. Never advise someone to stop taking medication or receiving professional support for their care or welfare.
- Avoid any language or prayers that suggest someone is to blame for their situation of abuse or that could instil shame.
- Avoid 'intense' forms of prayer for someone who has experienced trauma or is in crisis – for example, if lots of people surround one person and pray over them, this could feel overwhelming or frightening for some people in some situations.
- Never engage in any practices that could cause a person emotional, sexual or physical harm.

### Further information:

[Prayer \(thirtyoneeight.org\)](https://thirtyoneeight.org) (member resource)

### Associated safeguarding concern:

Child abuse linked to faith or belief: Abusive practices that take place in the name of faith or cultural belief such as witch accusations or possession by evil spirit.

[Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief – National FGM Centre](#)

[Child abuse linked to faith or belief \(thirtyoneeight.org\)](https://thirtyoneeight.org) (member resource)



## Appendix 11: Self-Harm

In the course of your pastoral ministry, you may become aware that someone is self-harming. They might tell you that they are doing this, or you might be concerned that this is happening from things you notice.

The charity [‘Mind’ defines self-harm](#) like this:

“Self-harm is when you hurt yourself as a way of dealing with very difficult feelings, painful memories or overwhelming situations and experiences.”\*

There are many different ways that people self-harm. Perhaps the form most people consider is cutting, but it can also involve misusing drugs or alcohol, getting into fights, not eating, or having unsafe sex.

There are also many reasons why someone might self-harm, including to express overwhelming feelings; to turn emotional pain into physical pain; to feel in control of their bodies; because a part of their body is associated with a traumatic event; because they feel a need to punish themselves; to feel something when they have dissociated (feel detached from their own body and environment). Some people are unsure why they self-harm.

## Self-Harm (continued)

Self-harm is often associated with suicide but for the majority of people the thought patterns are different, and a person is self-harming as a way of trying to cope with difficult feelings. However, self-harm is dangerous, and we would want to support someone to seek help and find safer ways to help themselves.

A simple plan to follow would be:

- Listen – Listen calmly, without judgement or rushing to talk. Reflect back what you have heard and give the person time to open up.
- Observe – What visual clues are there to the person's wellbeing? Do they have any injuries that need medical attention?
- Support – Reassure the person that you will support them, find out what support they would like, signpost to specialist support.
- Refer – Refer your concern to the safeguarding lead who will advise on next steps and follow your organisation's safeguarding process.

## Further Information and Support:

[Tips for coping with urges to self-harm right now - Mind](#)

[Self-harm tool | Childline](#)

[Information for 11-18 year olds on coping with self-harm - Mind](#)

[Self-harm - what you need to know. \(rethink.org\)](#)

[Samaritans | Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy | Here to listen](#)

[Self-harm | Mental Health Foundation](#)

[Phone support | Self Injury Support](#)

[Young Minds](#)

[Home - Calm Harm App \(stem4.org.uk\)](#)



## Appendix 12: Spiritual Abuse

Spiritual abuse is not a category of abuse specifically named in legislation in the UK. However, it is something that is becoming increasingly widely recognised within faith communities as a form of harm we need to address and avoid. Sometimes those of us involved in pastoral ministry can worry that we will be accused of spiritual abuse, or even that we will act in spiritually abusive ways by accident. This appendix is just a brief introduction to the subject, designed to offer some clarity of what spiritual abuse is, how we might recognise it, and what to do if we have concerns. Thirtyone:eight has a two-part training course on [Creating Healthy Christian Cultures and Understanding Spiritual Abuse](#) that explores this subject in much greater detail.

Spiritual abuse is a form of emotional or psychological abuse. These forms of harm are named in safeguarding legislation for adults and children across the UK. What makes spiritual abuse distinct is that harm occurs in religious or faith-based contexts and harmful behaviours are justified by aspects of faith or holy texts.

## Spiritual Abuse (continued)

Somebody who is experiencing spiritual abuse will be experiencing a persistent pattern of coercion and control. Healthy pastoral ministry can involve teaching, challenge and guidance; but this is very different from the misuse of scripture or faith to force, manipulate or threaten.

Key characteristics of spiritual abuse include:

- Use of scripture to coerce and control
- Unhealthy / enforced accountability without consent or boundaries
- Manipulation and exploitation
- Censorship and silencing
- Requirement for unquestioning obedience to the abuser
- Use of 'divine' calling to coerce\*
- Exclusion and isolation
- Public shaming and humiliation

If you notice any behaviours in your community that fit the definition of spiritual abuse or display any of these characteristics, talk to your safeguarding lead. Even if you're not sure, pass on your concern as you may not have the full picture but what you notice might form part of larger pattern.

Spiritual abuse is an extreme end of a spectrum of behaviour that ranges from healthy, nurturing behaviours through unhelpful and unhealthy behaviours to behaviours which meet a statutory definition of abuse. We want to create healthy, open faith communities where we address unhealthy behaviours before they become abusive. Passing on concerns, however small, is an important way to do this.

\*Feeling called to ministry by God isn't abusive. This refers to when the abuser puts themselves into the position of God in someone's life and suggests that disagreeing with them is like disagreeing with God.

# Spiritual Abuse (continued)

## Further information:

[Spiritual Abuse \(thirtyoneeight.org\)](https://thirtyoneeight.org) (Member resource)

[Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse: Creating Healthy Christian Cultu – Thirtyone:eight \(thirtyone-eight-charity.myshopify.com\)](https://thirtyone-eight-charity.myshopify.com) (Book by Justin Humphries and Dr Lisa Oakley)

[A Church Called Tov](#) Website and resources based on a book of the same name by Laura Barringer and Scott McKnight about creating healthy church cultures.

[Action on Spiritual Abuse](#) Charity supports those who have experienced abuse and trauma within faith communities.

# Signposting to other useful organisations and resources

Please note: These links are accurate at the time of course preparation. Thirtyone:eight don't recommend organisations, but you may find these links useful when looking for support and guidance.

## In times of crisis:

Call 999 in emergency situations

Local A&E departments are open 24 hours a day

[Samaritans](#) | [Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy](#) | [Here to listen](#) Helpline open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

## Urgent mental health support:

[Mental Health Triage - NHS 111](#) (England)

[Lifeline](#) | [Lifeline Helpline](#) (Northern Ireland)

[Mental health services at NHS 24 \(nhsinform.scot\)](#) (Scotland)

[NHS 111 Wales - Contact Us](#) (Wales)

## ACEs and Trauma

[Mind](#)

[UK Trauma Council](#)

[Home](#) | [Trauma Recovery UK \(trc-uk.org\)](#)

[Young Minds](#)

[ACE Hub Wales](#)

[Scottish Government ACEs Policy Information](#)

[Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland ACEs Information](#)

[Free online ACES Training](#)

## Alzheimer's and Dementia

[Alzheimer's Society \(alzheimers.org.uk\)](#)

[Home - Dementia UK](#)

[Caring for people with Dementia | Thirtyone:eight \(thirtyoneeight.org\)](#)

# Signposting (continued)

## Asylum Seekers and Refugees

[Get help as a refugee or asylum seeker | British Red Cross](#)

[Help for people seeking asylum - Refugee Council](#)

[Asylum helplines - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Help and Advice services for asylum seekers - Refugee Action \(refugee-action.org.uk\)](#)

[Asylum Aid | Protection from Persecution](#)

[Asylum services | Migrant Help \(migranthelpuk.org\)](#)

[Asylum seekers and refugees: help and advice | nidirect \(Northern Ireland\)](#)

[Supporting refugee children | Resources | YoungMinds](#)

## Bereavement

[AtaLoss.org signposting and information for bereaved people](#)

[What is bereavement? - Mind](#)

[Get help with grief after bereavement or loss - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Home - Cruse Bereavement Support](#)

[Sue Ryder's Online Bereavement Support | Sue Ryder](#)

[Bereavement support after the death of a baby or child - The Lullaby Trust](#)

[Child Bereavement UK](#)

[Winston's Wish - giving hope to grieving children \(winstonswish.org\)](#)

## Care Experienced Children

[Adoption UK Charity](#)

[Homepage - Kinship - The kinship care charity](#)

[Care experienced children and young people's mental health | Iriss](#)

[Looked after children | NSPCC Learning](#)

[Looked-after children and young people \(nice.org.uk\)](#)

[Looked after children | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

[Find out more about what we're doing to help... | Social Care Wales](#)

# Signposting (continued)

## Carers

[Carers Trust](#) | [Transforming the lives of carers](#) (Actively working in England, Scotland and Wales. Work in Northern Ireland currently paused. Website home page has links for each nation.)

[Northern Ireland](#) | [Carers NI](#)

[Support for young carers](#) | [Carers UK](#)

## Domestic Abuse

[How to respond to domestic abuse \(thirtyoneeight.org\)](#)

[Domestic abuse \(thirtyoneeight.org\)](#) (Members' resource)

[Home - Restored \(restored-uk.org\)](#)

[Homepage - National Domestic Abuse Helpline \(nationaldahelpline.org.uk\)](#)

[Men's Advice Line | Respect](#)

[Home - Women's Aid \(womensaid.org.uk\)](#)

[Refuge, the largest UK domestic abuse organisation for women](#)

## Lone Working

[Lone working \(thirtyoneeight.org\)](#) (Members' resource)

[Personal Safety & Lone Working training \(suzylampugh.org\)](#)

[Lone working - HSE](#)

## Mental Health

[Mental Health Foundation | Everyone deserves good mental health](#)

[What are mental health problems? - Mind](#)

[Rethink Mental Illness](#)

[Mental Health UK - Forward Together \(mentalhealth-uk.org\)](#)

[The Mind and Soul Foundation : Christianity and Mental Health](#)

[Home | Kintsugi Hope](#)

# Signposting (continued)

## Older Adults

[Age UK](#) | [The UK's leading charity helping every older person who needs us](#)

[Welcome to Hourglass](#) | [Hourglass \(wearehourglass.org\)](#)

[The Silver Line Helpline](#)

## Poverty in the UK

[Home](#) | [CAP UK](#)

[Home - The Trussell Trust](#)

[CPAG](#) | [We are the trusted voice on child poverty](#)

[Home - Let's End Poverty \(letsendpoverty.co.uk\)](#)

[Your Local Pantry - Church Action on Poverty \(church-poverty.org.uk\)](#)

[Food banks](#) | [The Salvation Army](#)

[Get help with the cost of living - Citizens Advice](#)

[Help with the cost of living](#) | [Age UK](#)

[Warm Welcome Campaign](#)

## Risk of Suicide - Resources for Crisis

[SPUK - Suicide Prevention UK](#)

[Papyrus UK Suicide Prevention](#) | [Prevention of Young Suicide \(papyrus-uk.org\)](#)

[Samaritans](#) | [Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy](#) | [Here to listen 24/7](#)

telephone support line

[Shout: the UK's free, confidential and 24/7 mental health text service for crisis support](#) | [Shout 85258 \(giveusashout.org\)](#) Free text service

[I feel suicidal](#) | [Campaign Against Living Miserably \(CALM\) \(thecalmzone.net\)](#)

[Where to get urgent help for mental health - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Stay Alive App - Grassroots Suicide Prevention \(prevent-suicide.org.uk\)](#)

[Staying Safe](#) Make a safety plan

[Zero Suicide Alliance \(ZSA\)](#) - Resources for suicide prevention, including a free 20-minute online training course.

# Signposting (continued)

## Self-Harm

[Tips for coping with urges to self-harm right now - Mind](#)

[Self-harm tool | Childline](#)

[Information for 11-18 year olds on coping with self-harm - Mind](#)

[Self-harm - what you need to know. \(rethink.org\)](#)

[Samaritans | Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy | Here to listen](#)

[Self-harm | Mental Health Foundation](#)

[Phone support | Self Injury Support](#)

[YoungMinds | Mental Health Charity For Children And Young People |](#)

[YoungMinds](#)

## Spiritual Abuse

[Spiritual Abuse \(thirtyoneeight.org\)](#) (Member resource)

[Action on Spiritual Abuse](#)

[Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse: Creating Healthy Christian Cultu –](#)

[Thirtyone:eight \(thirtyone-eight-charity.myshopify.com\)](#)

[A Church Called Tov](#)

## Further Reading

Safeguarding as Mission by Justin Humpreys: [Blog post](#) ; [Book](#)

# Links commonly used throughout the webinar

Please note: As above, these links are accurate at the time of course preparation. Thirtyone:eight don't recommend organisations, but you may find these links useful when looking for support and guidance.

These are shared in the order they're likely to be mentioned during our webinar.

[Theology of Safeguarding - Thirtyone:eight](#)

[Safeguarding as Mission – Book by Justin Humphreys](#)

[Types and indicators of abuse: Safeguarding adults - SCIE](#)

[Culture Conversation Cube – Thirtyone:eight](#)

[7 top tips: Safer, healthier culture - Thirtyone:eight](#)

[Survivors Collective Response \(survivorsvoices.org\)](#)

[A Church Called Tov](#)

[Where Do We Go from Here?: Chaos or Community? Martin Luther King Jr](#)

[Power in the Bible](#)

[Formal role profile - hospital chaplain](#)

[Informal role profile - Age UK volunteer befriender](#)

[OHC StressBucket.pdf \(hey.nhs.uk\)](#)