**Creating a Safe Environment for Vulnerable Adults** (taken from Church of England’s Parish Safeguarding Handbook)

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/ParishSafeGuardingHandBookAugust2019Web.pdf>

*The House of Bishops’ Safeguarding Policy Statement states that ‘The Church will strive to create and maintain environments that are safer for all, that promote well-being, that prevent abuse, and that create nurturing, caring conditions within the Church for children, young people and vulnerable adults …The Church will strive to support all church officers to adhere to safer working good practice and to challenge the abuse of power’.*

All those working on behalf of **xxx**with children, young people and adults **must:**

• Treat all individuals with respect and dignity.

• Ensure that their own language, tone of voice and body language are respectful.

• Ensure that children, young people and adults know who they can talk to about a personal concern.

• Record and report any concerns about a child, young person or adult and/or the behaviour of another worker with their activity leader and/or Parish Safeguarding Officer. Sign and date the record.

• Obtain written consent for any photographs/videos to be taken, shown, displayed or stored.

• Administer any First Aid with others around.

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All those working on behalf of **xxx** with children, young people and adults **must not:**

• Invade an individual’s privacy whilst washing and toileting.

• Use any form of physical punishment.

• Be sexually suggestive about or to an individual.

• Scapegoat, ridicule or reject an individual or group.

• Permit abusive peer activities e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying.

• Show favouritism to any one individual or group.

• Allow an individual to involve you in excessive attention seeking.

• Allow unknown adults access to children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable. Visitors should always be accompanied by an approved person.

• Allow strangers to give children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable in the group, lifts.

• Befriend children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable on social media.

• Take photographs on personal phones or cameras as this means that images are stored on personal devices.

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**Acceptable Touch**

Sympathetic attention, humour, encouragement and appropriate physical contact are needed by children and adults. Some physical contact with children, particularly younger children, is wholly appropriate.

The following guidelines regarding touching are suggested:

• Always ask permission.

• Be mindful of your body position.

• Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.

• Touch should be in response to a child or vulnerable adult’s needs and not related to the worker’s needs. It should be age appropriate, welcome and generally initiated by the child, not the church officer.

• Avoid any physical contact that is or could be construed as sexual and/or abusive/offensive.

**In addition:**

* You can allow people you support to give you brief hugs if you feel comfortable with this.
* You can allow people you support to hold hands or link arms with you to help with travel and stability.
* You should discourage people you support from touching your face. You can offer your hand instead.
* You should discourage people you support from sitting on your lap. You can offer to sit side by side.
* You should avoid using touch if the person you support is very distressed and is unlikely to tolerate it.

Ensure that church officers at all levels take responsibility for monitoring one another in the area of physical contact. They should be encouraged to challenge one another if necessary. Concerns about possible abuse or inappropriate behaviour should always be reported.

**Visiting adults**

Visiting vulnerable adults in their homes is an essential element of many church officers’ roles. Many parishioners will be well known to the church officer and where there have been no previous concerns, the level of risk to the church officer or parishioner during visits will usually be low. However, unexpected circumstances can be encountered, some of which may place a church officer at risk. For example, the unexpected presence in the home of a relative or friend with a history of violence or threatening behaviour. Unfortunately, case histories also show that a parishioner may be at risk from a church officer. For these reasons, it is very important for parishes to ensure their church officers and parishioners are as safe as they can be, and that there is accountability and transparency in the manner in which church officers engage in lone working or visits to homes.

To assure the person you are visiting of their safety, and for your own as a church officer:

• If possible undertake a risk assessment before an initial visit, especially if you do not know the person. If there are any concerns or risks known before a visit is made, you are advised always to undertake a risk assessment (see Model Risk Assessment Checklist for Home Visiting <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/promoting-safer-church/policy-practice-guidance/templates-resources> ). In these circumstances, consider whether the visit is necessary, or whether you should be accompanied by another church officer. In addition, visiting in pairs may be advisable, especially if the adult is perceived to be vulnerable.

• Do not call unannounced; call by appointment, if appropriate telephoning the person just before visiting.

• Be clear about what support you can offer and the purpose and limitations of any pastoral care/support that is available.

• Do not make referrals to any agency that could provide help without the adult’s permission, and ideally encourage them to set up the contact, unless there are safeguarding concerns.

• Never offer ‘over-the-counter’ remedies to people on visits or administer prescribed medicines, even if asked to do so.

• Do not accept any gifts from adults other than token items, to avoid misunderstandings or subsequent accusations from the person or their family. If someone wants to make a donation to the church, put it in an envelope, mark it on the outside as a donation and obtain a receipt from the Treasurer.

• Make a note of the date when you visit people, report back about the visit to the agreed named person and say what is concerning or going well. They will report safeguarding concerns to the Parish Safeguarding Officer and/or incumbent or directly to the DSA if they are not available.