

COMMUNITY OF THE WELL

SAFEGUARDING ISSUES IN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION: GUIDELINES

Last updated: April 2024. Approved by Directors:

An objective of the Community of the Well is to provide spiritual direction to guests on request. Inevitably, this sometimes means being alongside people who may be vulnerable or needy. At the Community of the Well we want to ensure that such relationships are appropriate and safe at all times. Therefore, those involved in delivering spiritual direction are expected to comply with the Community of the Well's safeguarding and good practice guidelines.

Types of Abuse

Physical abuse - including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions.

Sexual abuse - including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault, or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

Psychological abuse - including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services, or supportive networks.

Neglect – which includes:

Physical neglect: Failing to provide for a child's basic needs such as food, clothing or shelter. Failing to adequately supervise a child or provide for their safety.

Educational neglect: Failing to ensure a child receives an education.

Emotional neglect: Failing to meet a child's needs for nurture and stimulation, perhaps by ignoring, humiliating, intimidating or isolating them. It's often the most difficult to prove.

Medical neglect: Failing to provide appropriate health care, including dental care and refusal of care or ignoring medical recommendations.

Self-Neglect – covers a wide range of behaviour such as neglect of your personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

Spiritual Abuse - This is experienced as a deeply emotional personal attack and may include manipulation and exploitation, enforced accountability, censorship of decision making,

requirements for secrecy and silence, pressure to conform, misuse of scripture or the pulpit to control behaviour, requirement of obedience to the abuser, the suggestion that the abuser has a 'divine' position, isolation from others, especially those external to the abusive context (Oakley & Krinmond 2013 CCPAS).

Financial or material abuse - including theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Neglect and acts of omission - including ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Organisational abuse - including neglect or poor care practice within an organisation or specific care setting, such as a hospital or care home. It can also be in relation to care provided in your own home. This may range from one-off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Discriminatory abuse - including forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

Domestic abuse - including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional, or so-called, 'honour' based violence.

Modern slavery - encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Trafficking and slave masters coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

Cultural/Identity - Cultural abuse happens when abusers use aspects of a victim's particular cultural identity to inflict suffering, or as a means of control. Not letting someone observe the dietary or dress customs of their faith, using racial slurs, threatening to 'out' someone as LGBTQ+ if their friends and family don't know, or isolating someone who doesn't speak the dominant language where they live – all of these are examples of cultural abuse

People involved in spiritual direction on behalf of the Community of the Well will:

- abide by the Retreat Association Guidelines for Good Practice in Spiritual Direction (www.retreats.org.uk);
- have up to date DBS clearance;
- have completed appropriate safeguarding training; and
- expect to reflect with others on pastoral care issues which may arise for the Community of the Well and for themselves.
- To attend Supervision through St Antony's Priory

The Diocesan Safeguarding Policy includes the following practical guidance for pastoral care:

Pastoral care often involves one to one meetings either in a home context or on church premises. It is essential in pastoral care to acknowledge appropriate physical, sexual, emotional and psychological boundaries. Inappropriate touching or gestures of affection are to be avoided. The following simple tips may help everyone to feel safe:

- Carry identification and be prepared to identify yourself.
- Be aware of your surroundings and potential hazards. Always be aware of your exits and if possible try to sit in a place where there is no one between you and the exit.
- Set some boundaries at the outset, in particular how long you expect the meeting to take.
- Trust your intuition. If you feel uneasy, act straight away and find a way of ending the meeting, or leaving.
- Make sure someone knows where you are and what time you expect to be back; if you have any reason to be concerned, make specific arrangements to check in with someone; consider making arrangements for someone to contact you after a fixed period of time.
- Ensure your mobile phone is charged and accessible
- Keep a simple record of sessions, including anything that causes concern. Concerns should be shared appropriately with a supervisor, Directors, and/or the safeguarding officer. If there is any safeguarding concern the set procedures must be followed. See Diocesan Safeguarding Policy Version 2019.1 Section 6, available at <https://durhamdiocese.org/safeguarding-abuse-concerns/#1522767228794-266a4982-248d>