

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF SWANAGE
PARISH STATEMENT ON DOMESTIC ABUSE
POLICY FOR RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC ABUSE

All forms of domestic abuse are wrong and must stop. We are committed to promoting and supporting environments which:

- Ensure that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse;
- Protect those vulnerable to domestic abuse from actual or potential harm;
- Recognise equality amongst people and within relationships;
- Enable and encourage concerns to be raised and responded to appropriately and consistently.

We recognise that:

- All forms of domestic abuse cause damage to the survivor and express an imbalance of power in the relationship;
- All survivors (regardless of aged, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity) have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse;
- Domestic abuse can occur in all communities;
- Domestic abuse may be a single incident, but is usually a systematic, repeated pattern which escalates in severity and frequency;
- Domestic abuse, if witnessed or overheard by a child, is a form of abuse by the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour;
- Working in partnership with children, adults and other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of any child or adult suffering abuse.

We will endeavour to respond to domestic abuse by:

In all our activities -

- Valuing, listening to and respecting both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

In our publicity –

- Raising awareness about other agencies, support services, resources and expertise, through providing information in public and women-only areas of

relevance to survivors, children and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

When concerns are raised –

- Ensuring that those who have experienced abuse can find safety and informed help;
- Working with the appropriate statutory bodies during an investigation into domestic abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the church community.

In our care –

- Ensuring that informed and appropriate pastoral care is offered to any child, young person or adult who has suffered abuse;
- Identifying and outlining the appropriate relationship of those with pastoral care responsibilities with both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

If you have any concerns or need to talk to anyone please contact one of our Safeguarding Officers. Current contact details can be found on our website: www.swanageteam.com or on posters displayed both inside and outside our churches.

Appendices -

- **Appendix 1 – Responding to victims/survivors including flow chart**
- **Appendix 2 – Responding to alleged or known perpetrators**
- **Appendix 3 – Additional Guidance for clergy and licensed lay ministers**
- **Appendix 4 – Confidentiality and Data Protection**
- **Appendix 5 – Resources**
- **Appendix 6 – Draft Safety and Exit Plan**
- **Appendix 7 – Marriage Preparation: Recommended Good Practice**

This policy was adopted by the PCC on 18th September 2019.

Dates Reviewed:

- a) 20.07.2021
- b) 10.05.2022
- c) 09.05.2023

PCC of Swanage
Charity Registration Number 1134114

APPENDIX 1 – Responding to victims/survivors

Please note: You are reminded that the ‘due regard’ duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 applies.

Initial disclosure

If a victim discloses abuse, the following factors are important:

- Most victims/survivors want to be asked. If you are able to broach the subject, your offer of help could be the first step in enabling them to seek help; e.g. ‘How are things at home?’ and if it becomes appropriate, ‘Is anyone hurting you?’
- Do try wherever possible to talk in a safe, private place where you will not be interrupted, or arrange to talk again (but someone in distress may start talking anywhere)
- Do try to make it clear that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, depending on the nature of what is disclosed. Whilst you might respect an individual’s right to confidentiality this cannot be guaranteed i.e. when someone is being hurt and a criminal offence has been committed, someone is in danger, or when children are involved.
- Do take plenty of time to listen and believe what they say. If they sense disbelief they may be discouraged from speaking again.

Immediate action

- Do dial 999 if you are witnessing a violent incident or if the person needs medical care. If the victim is in immediate danger, the police should be called. Be aware that intervention may heighten risk, but it is important to explore how to ensure people are safe.
- The safety of children is paramount. If children are involved, a referral to Children’s Service needs to be made in addition to calling the police; if possible, encourage the victim to make the referral themselves, perhaps supporting them through the process. The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor will also need to be informed.

Your response to the disclosure

- Do be sensitive to people’s backgrounds and cultures and check your own and their understanding of how the cultural issues affect them. Ask them about what support is available to them from family and friends.

- Do affirm the strength and courage it takes to have survived the abuse and even more to talk about it.
- Do encourage them to seek professional help from a local domestic abuse service who will be able to offer practical safety planning advice, even if they do not want to leave their home. In addition give information about national specialist helplines and websites, as required (see appendix 5)
- Do express concern for their safety and immediate welfare. Do they have somewhere to stay?
- Do ask about the children and their safety and welfare. You may need to persuade them to report any concerns to children's social care. You have no option but to do so if you have received information that a child is at risk.
- Do encourage them to focus on their own needs, something they may not have been able to do since the abuse began but which is crucial in helping them to change the situation.
- Do reassure them that, whatever the circumstances, abuse is not justified and not their fault.
- Do ask them what they want from you and the parish. Offer help which is in response to their needs and preferences and which lets them keep in control.

Record keeping and follow up (see Appendix 4 for issues of confidentiality and data protection)

- Do check if it is all right to contact them at home before doing so. Ask them what their preferred means of contact is and confirm that this is safe.
- Do keep information confidential and as a general rule only share with informed consent where appropriate and if possible, respect the wishes of those who do not give consent to share confidential information. You should note that it may still be possible to share confidential information without consent if, in your judgement, it is necessary and proportionate to do so (i.e. there is a good reason), such as where the safety of the victim or (an) other(s) may be at risk. Always keep a record of your decision and the reasons why you decided to share (or not). If in doubt contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor and the Diocesan Registrar.
- Do make a brief objective note of date, facts and context of what you have been told but keep your opinions separate. This should be kept in strict confidence but could be useful in any future prosecution (see Safeguarding

Records: Joint Practice Guidance for the Church of England and the Methodist Church (2015)).

- You must **share the incident with someone who is qualified within 24 hours** and can support you to help you to think through the issues and action. This may be the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor or local safeguarding officer/lead.
- Do seek advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor or local safeguarding officer/lead to review the safety and risk issues in relation to the alleged perpetrator if they are in the same church. There may need to be a risk assessment and 'safeguarding agreement' put in place in line with the House of Bishops Guidance. (Safeguarding Policy Statements & Practice Guidance). This work needs to be undertaken in consultation with the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor.
- Victim safety planning should be conducted by a professional, ideally from a domestic abuse service or statutory agency. There may be occasion when a victim wishes to discuss their safety with you. It is essential that you seek advice from a Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor before entering into detailed safety planning discussion. This planning would normally be guided by a safety planning format (see appendix 6) and careful consideration should be given to where and how much information is provided and kept by the victim, to avoid being accessed by the perpetrator.
- If the alleged perpetrator is a church officer you must talk to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor and follow the House of Bishops practice guidance on responding to serious safeguarding concerns in relation to church officers. (Safeguarding Policy Statements & Practice Guidance).
- DO not give information about the victim's whereabouts to the perpetrator or to others who might pass information on to the perpetrator. Do not discuss with the parish council/other members of the congregation who might inadvertently pass information on to the perpetrator.
- When victims are leaving a controlling perpetrator, they often have to leave with nothing and have access to very limited financial support. Consider how your church can provide practical support to survivors.

Key telephone numbers for sources of help

- National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247
- Legal support (national Centre for Domestic Violence): 0844 8044 999 – provides a free, fast, emergency injunction service for victims of domestic abuse

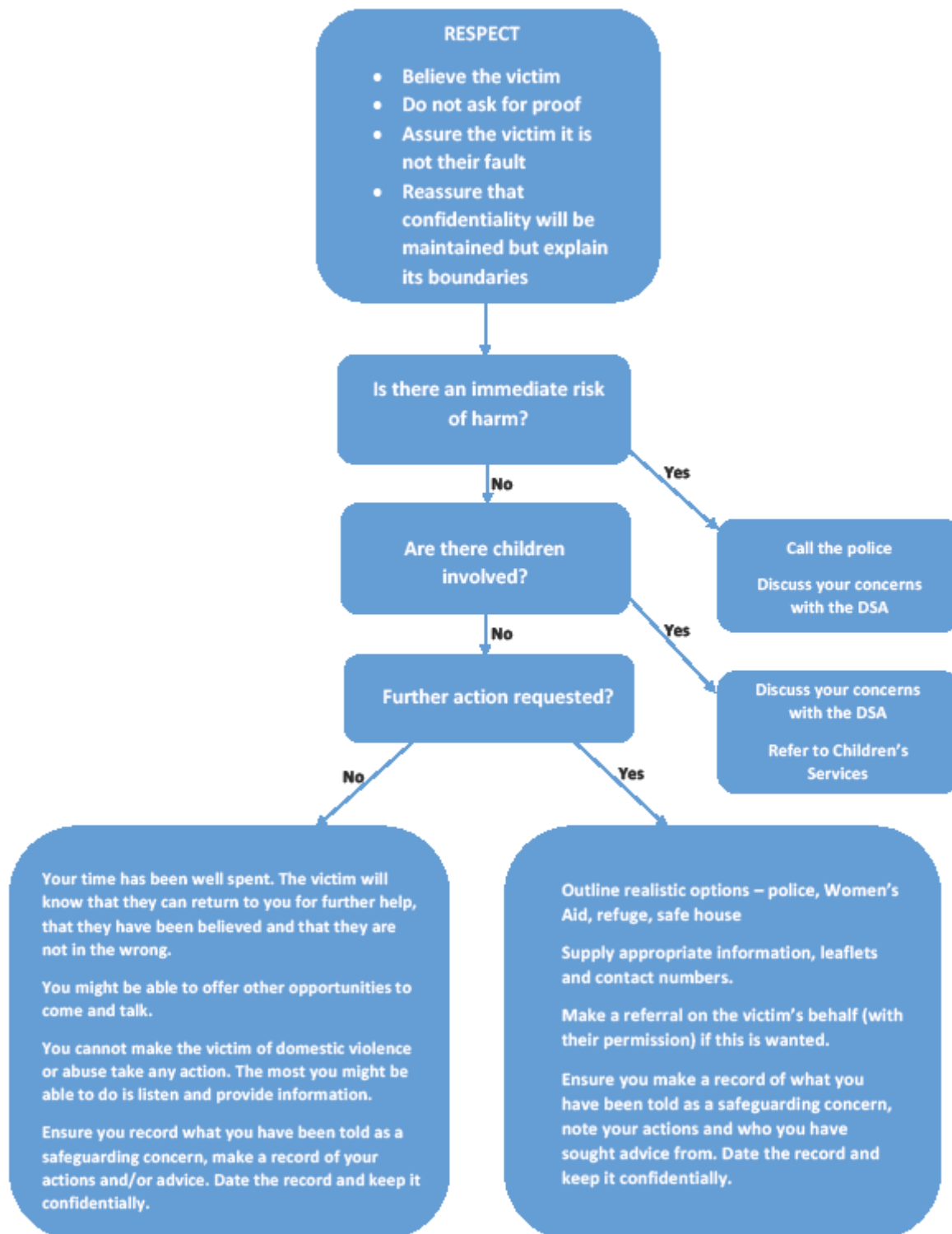
- Male victims (Respect): 0808 801 0327
- Helpline for domestic abuse in same sex relationships: 0800 999 5428

Disclosure Flow Chart

It is recognised that it can be difficult to make a referral, which can be with or without permission of the victim. Local Authority Social Care Departments are aware of the issues and sensitivities in relation to domestic abuse, and will ensure that they operate with professionalism and an awareness of the situation.

Nevertheless, it is important that they are aware of the information concerning domestic abuse, so that they can act on it appropriately. It is not the role of the Church, nor anyone employed within the Church, to investigate the issues and incidents – only social care and the police have these statutory powers.

DOMESTIC ABUSE DISCLOSURE FLOWCHART



APPENDIX 2 – Responding to alleged or known perpetrators

The Church has an important role in challenging inappropriate behaviour. This can, however, lead to increased risks for both the victim and the person who challenges the alleged or known perpetrator. This needs to be done in an extremely careful way, i.e. one that does not place a victim at increased risk.

Factors to consider include:

- Ensuring that the victim is at the highest priority in terms of safety and wellbeing, and that any action is victim/survivor centred.
- If the alleged perpetrator is to be met, ensuring that it is in a public place, and that there are others in the meeting.
- Maintaining an awareness of the danger that the alleged perpetrator may pose to you, and ensuring that you and others are safe.
- You must **share the incident with a properly trained professional within 24 hours** who can support you to help you to think through the issues and actions. This may be the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor or local safeguarding officer/lead. There may need to be a risk assessment and 'safeguarding agreement' put in place in line with the House of Bishops practice guidance. (Safeguarding Policy Statements & Practice Guidance). This work needs to be undertaken in consultation with the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor.
- If the alleged perpetrator is a church officer you must talk to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor and follow the House of Bishops practice guidance on responding to serious safeguarding concerns in relation to church officers. (Safeguarding Policy Statements & Practice Guidance).
- Co-operating and working with the statutory authorities ensuring that information is only given to them and not to the alleged perpetrator concerning the victim.
- Sharing information about helplines and services

Record keeping and follow up

Please see Appendix 1 section on 'Record keeping and follow up' advice.

Additional guidance in relation to responding to alleged or known perpetrators is as follows:

Do try to make it clear that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Whilst you might respect an individual's right to confidentiality this cannot be guaranteed. Information has to be shared without consent when someone is

being hurt, a criminal offence has been committed and/or a child or adult is at risk. If you are unsure whether or not to share information contact your Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor.

Do seek advice from a Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor or local safeguarding officer/lead if the alleged perpetrator threatens self-harm, as they may require urgent support.

Appendix 4 covers issues of confidentiality and data protection.

There are some actions to avoid in responding to alleged or known perpetrators:

- Do not collude with, excuse or minimise their behaviour.
- Do not meet with them alone and in private. Meet in a public place or in the church with several other people around.
- Do not try to investigate or offer/provide treatment. Only those professionally trained should discuss any issues formally with them.
- Do not provide a character witness in any proceedings and be involved in any process which may seem as if the Church supports their position. Do not advocate for the perpetrator.

APPENDIX 3 – Additional guidance for clergy and licensed lay ministers

Responding to victims

- Do help the victim/survivor with any religious concerns. *(A helpful book is 'Keeping the faith: Guidance for Christian women facing abuse' Marie M Fortune.)*
- Do emphasise that the marriage covenant is broken by the violence from their partner.
- **Do not pursue couples' counselling/mediation with them and their partner if you are aware that there is violence in the relationship.**
- Do assure them of God's love and presence.
- Do pray with them
- Don't encourage them to forgive the alleged perpetrator and/or take them back.

Responding to perpetrators

- Do address any religious rationalisations they may offer or questions they may have.
- Do not allow them to use religious excuses for their behaviour.
- Do name the abuse as their problem, not the victim's/survivor's. Tell them that only they can stop it and seek assistance.
- **Do not pursue couples' counselling/mediation with them and their partner if you are aware that there is violence in the relationship.**
- Do not be taken in by his 'conversion' experience. If it is genuine, it will be a tremendous resource as they proceed with accountability. If it is phony, it is only another way to manipulate you and the system and maintain control of the process to avoid accountability.
- Do pray with them.
- Do assure them of your support in this endeavour.

Please see the FAOC paper on 'Forgiveness and Reconciliation' for further information. *(This paper is still to be published at the time of publishing this policy).*

APPENDIX 4 – Confidentiality and Data Protection

If in doubt about whether to disclose information please contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor and Diocesan Registrar for guidance.

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

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

The key factors in deciding whether or not to share confidential information without consent are necessity and proportionality, i.e. whether the proposed sharing is likely to make an effective contribution to preventing any risk and whether the public interest in sharing information overrides the confidentiality. In making the decision, a person should weigh up what are the risks if the information is shared against what are the risks if it is not shared and make a decision based on his or her professional judgement, or by seeking advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor and the Diocesan Registrar. It may be necessary to make a disclosure without consent, for example, when a disclosure would be likely to assist in the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime, especially a crime of violence. Indeed, when a victim of domestic abuse refuses to contact the police, disclosure will be justified if children remain at risk, for example.

Data Protection

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, sensitive personal data includes information which relates to a person's physical or mental health, sexual life or to the commission or alleged commission of an offence. The 1998 Act restricts the use of such information, including disclosure of third parties, without the explicit consent of the data subject (i.e. the individual to whom the information relates). Nevertheless, there are certain instances, under data protection legislation (*Data Protection (Processing of Sensitive Personal Data) Order 2000*), where such information can be shared without a data subject's consent provided that it is in the substantial public interest, for instance this includes:

- If it is necessary for the purposes of prevention or detection of any unlawful act; or
- To protect members of the public against dishonesty, malpractice, or other seriously improper conduct; or
- It is necessary for the discharge of any function which is designed for the provision of confidential counselling advice, support or any other service;
- And seeking consent would prejudice the purposes for which the information is sought.

If you are unsure whether or not you can disclose personal and/or confidential information to a relevant third party you should speak to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor and the Diocesan Registrar.

Storage of confidential records

All confidential records (whether or not they contain personal data) should be stored safely and securely in line with Safeguarding Records: Joint Practice Guidance for the Church of England and the Methodist Church (2015). (<https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2254792/safeguarding%20practice%20guidance%20-%20safeguarding%20records.pdf>)

APPENDIX 5 – RESOURCES

Women’s Aid

Provides services for women and children who have been affected by the experience of domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse.

0808 2000247 www.womensaid.org.uk

Refuge

Refuge is the national charity which provides a range of specialist domestic violence services to women and children experiencing domestic violence.

0808 2000 247 www.refuge.org.uk

Rape Crisis

Rape Crisis Centres offer a range of services for women and girls who have been raped or experienced another form of sexual violence.

0808 802 9999 www.rapecrisis.org.uk

National Domestic Violence Helpline

The Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline run in partnership with Women’s Aid and Refuge.

0808 2000 247

National Centre for Domestic Violence

The National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV) provides free, fast, emergency injunction service to survivors of domestic violence.

24 hour helpline: 0800970 2070 www.ncdv.org.uk

NSPCC ChildLine

Free, confidential service for young people up to the age of 19. Get help and advice about a wide range of issues, talk to a counsellor online, send ChildLine and email or post on the message boards.

0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk

NSPCC Helpline

Free helpline service for anyone with concerns about a child’s safety and wellbeing, even one in their own home. You can speak to a NSPCC counsellor 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Advice and support is provided for parents and carers and consultations with professionals are offered. We will listen to your concerns offer advice and support and can take action on your behalf if a child is in danger.

0808 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse/

Galop

Galop gives advice and support to LGBT people who have experienced hate crime, sexual violence and domestic abuse.

LGBT domestic violence helpline: 0800 999 5428

London LGBT Casework Service: 0207 704 2040 www.galop.org.uk/

Respect

The Respect phone line is a confidential helpline offering advice, information and support to help you s

top being violent and abusive to your partner.

0808 802 4040 www.respectphoneline.org.uk www.respect.uk.net

Samaritans

A 24-hour helpline for any person in emotional distress.

116 123 www.samaritans.org

SafeLives (formerly Co-ordinated Action against Domestic Abuse (CAADA))

SafeLives is a national charity supporting a strong multi-agency response to domestic abuse. It provides practical help to support professionals and organisations working with domestic abuse victims, with the aim of protecting the highest risk victims and their children – those at risk of murder or serious harm.

0117 403 3220 <http://www.safelives.org.uk/>

Unfortunately SafeLives does not provide direct support or advice to victims of domestic violence. However, if you are experiencing domestic abuse or are supporting someone who is in that situation, immediate help is available via the National Domestic Violence Helpline.

The Men's advice Line

A confidential helpline for men experiencing domestic violence from a partner or ex-partner (or from other family members).

0808 801 0327 (Monday-Friday 9am-5pm) www.mensdaviceline.org.uk

Mankind Initiative

Support for male victims of domestic abuse and domestic violence.

01823 334 244 (weekdays 10am-4pm) www.mankind.org

Karma Nirvana

Karma Nirvana supports those who suffer or are at risk of honour based abuse or forced marriage.

0800 599 247 (9am-9pm Weekdays & 10-4pm Weekends) <http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk>

Appendix 6: Draft Safety and Exit plan¹

Step 1: I CAN USE SOME OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIES:

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

Step 2: SAFETY WHEN PREPARING TO LEAVE

Leaving must be done with a careful plan in order to increase safety. Perpetrators often strike back when they believe that the person they are abusing is leaving the relationship. I can use some or all the following safety strategies:

- A. I will leave money and an extra set of keys with _____ so that I can leave quickly.
- B. I will keep copies of important papers and documents or an extra set of keys at _____.
- C. I will open a savings account by _____, to increase my independence.
- D. Other things I can do to increase my independence include:

¹ Source: Elaine Rose, DSA, Diocese of Canterbury

APPENDIX 7 – MARRIAGE PREPARATION: RECOMMENDED GOOD PRACTICE

Marriage preparation offers an opportunity to challenge inappropriate behaviour and assumptions about domination, control or abuse, while making it clear that some degree of conflict within an intimate relationship is natural and healthy, if dealt with appropriately.

The principles of understanding humanity (female and male) as made in God's image and of equal worth; of equality amongst people and within relationships; not condoning any form of abuse, should underpin any marriage preparation offered by the Church. Some theological ideas such as headship and submission models of men and women have been expressed in liturgy in the past in the different promises expressed by the man and the woman. However, a promise to obey was in the past part of different standards or expectations of women and men within marriage, e.g. the fact that women had no standing in law until 1926. A mutuality expressed through the marriage which encourages partners to be themselves rather than sticking to gendered roles offers a better opportunity for both partners to grow and flourish in the relationship than does a differentiated model, in which one partner takes responsibility for the other's growth, but not vice versa.

Given the high incidence of domestic abuse within marriage, we recommend that clergy and lay people who offer marriage and wedding preparation should have attended some training on issues of domestic abuse. It is important that there is a clear understanding amongst those who offer marriage preparation that domestic abuse is always unacceptable and that domestic abuse breaks the sanctity of marriage.

The subjects regularly dealt with when preparing couples for marriage, e.g. communication, conflict and in particular 'How do you deal with your anger?' offer an opportunity for couples to discuss together how their parents dealt with anger, rows and conflict or how the couple might have dealt with these in previous relationships. Sometimes those who have experienced domestic abuse as children have a very idealised view of marriage.

It is possible that those working with couples hoping to marry may become aware or suspect that abuse is taking place or may take place between the partners. This is always a difficult area to deal with and illustrates the need for training for

people involved in this work, but one or more of the following ideas might help in such a situation.

The facilitator might include a statement at the beginning of the 'course' or conversation and again before dealing with a subject such as 'marital conflict' or anger. The following, which may need amending depending on the circumstances, is an example of a form of words that might be appropriate:

'When we think about relationships in general and our own particular, there is always a chance that issues may be raised that touch us in a way that leaves us feeling disturbed, uncomfortable or anxious. If this happens you may wish to speak to one of us today more privately or to seek help from a counsellor or other helping organisation.'

If a domestic abuse issue is raised directly or indirectly by one of the couple, the facilitator should not pursue it in the presence of the other: this could be highly dangerous. They may need to find a way to give the person a chance to say more in private, with the object of encouraging them to get one-to-one help from a competent person or organisation.