Diocese of Bath and Wells Domestic Abuse Policy

1. **Foreword by the Bishop of Bath and Wells**

I once spoke to a parish priest who’d asked officers at his local police station about the most common concerns, they met in their day-to-day work. ‘Simple sir,’ came the reply, ‘It’s domestic abuse and mental health’. How many of us would have guessed that would be the answer? Because for so much of the time, these most significant issues in the lives of our communities, and domestic abuse particularly, are hidden in plain sight.

Yet as the response of local police shows, domestic abuse is all around us. That’s why I am so glad to commend this domestic abuse policy that has been developed for our Diocese of Bath & Wells. It shines a light on this issue and invites us to make a response. What might that be? An answer comes in Psalm 147 which says of God:

‘He heals the broken-hearted,
   and binds up their wounds.
He determines the number of the stars;
   he gives to all of them their names.’

Our calling is to join with God in bringing wholeness to a broken world of which domestic violence is such a feature. We are to be those who heal the broken hearted and who bind up wounds. This policy encourages us to get on with that work. The Psalmist also speaks of a God who sees everything. Just as he sees and names the stars, he sees the damage done among individuals, families and communities by domestic violence. Our task is to see and act on this issue too.

I’m hugely grateful to those who have framed this policy that’s created for us all to adopt and work with. I commend it to you.

+Michael

1. **Introduction.**

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

* ensure that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse;
* work to protect those experiencing domestic abuse;
* recognise equality amongst people and within relationships;
* refuse to condone any form of abuse;
* enable and encourage concerns to be raised and responded to openly and consistently in accordance with practice guidance.
1. **Policy Statement**

*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 age, 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.
1. **Diocesan Response.**

*We will respond to domestic abuse:*

**In all our activities by –**

* valuing, listening to and respecting both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse, whilst appreciating the need to ensure a distance is kept between the two and refusing to condone the perpetration or continuation of any form of abuse.

**In our publicity by –**

* 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.
* Providing Awareness of Domestic Abuse Training for all volunteers eligible for Basic Safeguarding Training to ensure we develop a robust culture that promotes safety and awareness of how to respond.
* The Diocesan Safeguarding Team will work with the National Safeguarding Team to further develop Training for responding to Domestic Abuse and ensure knowledge and awareness remains current.

**When concerns are raised by –**

* 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 by –**

* 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.
* Providing where possible transformative interventions with perpetrators of domestic abuse who are not able to access this through statutory agencies.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and procedures regularly.

1. **Advice and Support**

*The Diocese of Bath and Wells Safeguarding Team will provide advice and support for individuals, Parishes and church bodies.*

* The Safeguarding team will provide advice and support to anyone experiencing or concerned about domestic abuse, for themselves or for others.
* All concerns reported to the Diocese in respect of Church officers and domestic abuse will be monitored and recorded by the Diocese Safeguarding Team.
* Support is available to all Parishes in implementing a Domestic Abuse policy and related practice Guidance.
* Training is provided by the Diocese for those in leadership, safeguarding and pastoral positions in the Diocese and Parishes.
* The Diocese will work in partnership with specialist agencies including Police, Local Authorities, Community Safety Partnerships to support victims and survivors of Domestic Abuse.
* The Bishop of Bath and Wells seeks to support the spouses and partners of clergy whose relationships have broken down irretrievably and are separating. They are offered, by invitation, contact with and the support of a Bishop’s Visitor. This offer is facilitated by the Bishop’s Chaplain. Whilst there is no assumption that domestic abuse will have been a contributory factor in the break-up of the relationship, Bishop’s Visitors will be cognisant of this policy and will respond appropriately to any disclosures of abuse.

6. **Independent Advice and Support**

* The Diocesan Safeguarding team are available to provide independent unbiased sensitive and discrete advice and guidance. However, the Diocese of Bath and Wells also supports and encourages anyone who may be experiencing, or are concerned about domestic abuse for themselves or others, to seek advice and support completely independent to the Diocese if they would prefer to speak with a specialist advisor outside of the Church.
* We commend the recognised specialist support services to anyone seeking such independent support or advice [Domestic abuse (somerset.gov.uk)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/domestic-abuse/).

To contact a member of our Diocesan Safeguarding Team please visit this link [Bath and Wells Diocese | Safeguarding](https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/parish-support/safeguarding/)

To access further safeguarding resources please visit this link [Bath and Wells Diocese | National guidance](https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/parish-support/safeguarding/national-guidance/)

To access Domestic Abuse Awareness Training please visit this link [Safeguarding Training Portal (cofeportal.org)](https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/)

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Next Review Date 18/10/2022