

## **Diocese of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich**

### **Mistreatment and Abuse of Adults by Adults – Summary of Papers**

The papers relating to this area of Diocesan Policy include the following:

#### **1. The Policy**

The key paragraph of which is as follows:

**‘Lay and ordained members of the Diocese share responsibility for creating and maintaining relationships and structures which demonstrate people’s equal value in God’s sight, so that the possibility of abuse is reduced. We are also jointly responsible for recognising abuse when it occurs, and for responding appropriately in such situations.’**

#### **2. The Definition**

This includes the following principles:

- Abuse is a misuse of power which leaves another person feeling damaged – uncomfortable, or distressed, or hurt, or confused and vulnerable, or a combination of these things.
- Mistreatment, or abuse, of adults, as of children, takes place in situations where unequal power and secrecy can be found.
- There is an ability to abuse in all of us, although the preferred position is that we are Carers or Rescuers, and that others are the Persecutors.
- Mistreatment or abuse may be conscious or unconscious.
- Abuse can be evident between clergy and laity, non-stipendiary and stipendiary clergy, church officials and the clergy, church officials and members of the congregation.
- Abuse and mistreatment are expressed through physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, or intellectual means.
- Awareness of racial, cultural and gender issues, as potential areas for mistreatment of adults, needs to be constantly monitored, especially where people believe themselves to be free from prejudice.

#### **3. A Code of Practice**

The code of practice seeks to promote the Diocese’s policy in relation to the mistreatment of adults. It is designed to encourage members of the Diocese to recognise the equal value of all before God. It is also designed to reduce the incidence of the mistreatment of adults, and to enable abuse to be recognised and dealt with appropriately in ways which demonstrate the love of God for all involved. It is commended to all within the Diocese, lay and ordained, for consideration as part of their Christian discipleship.

The code provides guidelines and points for reflection in the following areas:

- **Professionalism and the proper conduct of church life**

Being professional in ministry and reducing the risk of our mistreating others, requires an understanding of power, theology, boundaries and confidentiality, and the conditions in which ministry takes place.

- **Power**

Exercising ministry, especially public ministry, places people in a position of power. It creates inequalities in the relationship between those ministering and those ministered to. This needs to be constantly recognised and recalled by all concerned.

- **Theology**

The language of theology is a powerful one. It can be used to liberate or to subjugate people, to clarify or confuse.

- **Boundaries and Confidentiality**

Given the complexity of pastoral ministry, attention needs to be given to boundaries – what behaviour is appropriate in what setting. This raises the further issue of confidentiality – what may be shared with whom, and on what occasions?

- **The conditions in which ministry takes place**

Ministry provides an opportunity for people to offer freely of their time, their resources and their lives. However, for both stipendiary ministers and those who give their time voluntarily, there exists the possibility that their generosity will be exploited and they will find themselves giving more than can reasonably be expected.

- **In cases where abuse takes place, or is alleged**

In such situations the code of practice advocated by the House of Bishops will be implemented – see appendices 1 and 2

## **Appendix 1 – An Outline of the Provisions of the Clergy Discipline Measure**

## **Appendix 2 – Guidelines for a Church of England Complaints Procedure relating to People Authorised by Bishop's Licence to Leadership Positions in the Church**

### **Discussion Starters – Questions based on the Code of Practice**

The aim of these questions is to enable people to reflect on the issues raised in the Policy, Definition and Code of Practice, act to prevent abuse, and respond appropriately when abuse is suspected or identified.

**All these papers may be found on the Diocesan Website**

**[www.stedmundsbury.anglican.org](http://www.stedmundsbury.anglican.org)**

**Click on Administration, and then on Policy**