



## **Domestic Abuse – Policy statement**

### **Foreword by the Bishop of Exeter and theological statement**

#### **Foreword to Diocesan Policy on Domestic Abuse**

‘Binding up the broken-hearted and proclaiming freedom for captives’ is a fundamental message of the Gospel. According to Luke, when reading in the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus adopted these words of the prophet Isaiah as his own manifesto. Interestingly, in the King James Bible, the verse is translated somewhat differently: ‘*to set at liberty them that are bruised*’. The old translation provides a helpfully wider context for understanding who the captives might be.

In recent years we have become acutely aware of the way in which many people today are held captive by circumstances beyond their control or find themselves trapped in abusive relationships where they may be bruised physically, emotionally or spiritually. Domestic abuse in all its forms is contrary to the will of God and is an affront to human dignity.

This diocesan policy on domestic abuse is modelled on that of the National Church. Drawing upon the experience of professionals, it sets out principles to prevent abuse, as well as the protocols that must be followed should a problem arise. It also lists information, resources and contact details if further help is needed. It expresses our commitment to understand the dimensions of abuse and, where possible, play our part in preventing and challenging it.

I commend this policy for your study and reflection.

+ Robert Exon

The Right Reverend Robert Atwell *Bishop of Exeter*

#### **Our commitment:**

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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and procedures regularly.

## Advice and support

The Diocese of Exeter Safeguarding Team will provide advice and support for Parishes and church bodies - [Safeguarding Team contact](#) :

- The Safeguarding team will provide advice and support to anyone experiencing or concerned about domestic abuse
- 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.
- Bishops Visitors are available to support the partners of clergy whose relationships are affected or broken down as a result of Domestic Abuse, Bishops Visitors can be contacted in confidence through the Diocesan Secretary:

## Independent support and advice

Whilst the Diocesan Safeguarding team will provide independent unbiased sensitive and discrete advice and guidance, the Diocese of Exeter supports and encourages anyone who may be experiencing or are concerned about domestic abuse, to seek advice and support completely independent to the Diocese if they would prefer to speak with a specialist advisor outside of the Church.

Devon Domestic Abuse Service:	Plymouth Domestic Abuse Service:	Torbay Domestic Abuse Service:
<b>0345 155 1074</b>	<b>01752 252033</b>	<b>01803 698869</b>

Details of a wide range of local support services can also be found at [Devon & Cornwall's Victim Care website](#) which has a comprehensive directory of organisations and services that can provide advice and support.

### **Practice guidance**

Church of England and Diocese of Exeter safeguarding documents and resources can be found at:

[Safeguarding Resources \(Domestic Abuse\) - Diocese of Exeter](#)