

Section 7

The Role of the Church

This section clarifies the respective roles of those in different leadership positions, within the diocese and within the parish, in the event of a child protection enquiry and its aftermath.

It outlines the possible support needs of all those potentially affected and how these might be met.

It is important that those with leadership roles in the diocese and in a parish are familiar with the content.

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7.1 Role of the Clergy

Responsibility for Safe Recruitment

Ultimate responsibility for the safe recruitment of suitable children's workers and youth workers lies with the incumbent. See Section 9.

Involvement in Child Protection

There are a variety of ways in which a member of the clergy may become involved pastorally with issues involving child protection. It may be that a parishioner will approach you for help on discovering that their child has been abused. Possibly a child in a school you visit regularly will confide in you. A youth group leader may express concerns regarding a child in the group, or perhaps an allegation of abuse will be made against a member of the congregation.

Questions to be faced

In these situations, you will often feel exposed and vulnerable. There are many theological and pastoral questions to be asked. For example:

- What if someone admits to child abuse during confession?
- What support can you expect?
- How can a victim and the accused both be cared for by the church?
- What about the families of both?
- What relationship should you have with other agencies, and which agencies?
- How does this situation marry with your theology?
- What does it say about sin, forgiveness, justice?
- What about other people in the congregation?

What to do

Your first instinct might be to try to ignore the whole thing and hope it goes away.

This is not an option

The first and most important thing to realize is that you are not expected to deal with such situations on your own, even though confidentiality is a central part of your role. The Bishop's Child Protection Adviser (BCPA) is there specifically to offer guidance, support and expertise, and has contact with the statutory services. The BCPA is a member of the Bishop's Child Protection Management Group (BCPMG) (see Section 1).

Other support

Following guidance from *"Protecting All God's Children"*, designated people within congregations have been appointed as Parish Child Protection Co-ordinators in child protection. Their role is to work with leaders of children's work to ensure that correct procedures are in place and are being followed. Thus, the responsibility for following the correct procedures is a shared one.

It may seem unusual to share confidential pastoral matters, and you need to be clear about who should have access to what information. Our duty is to focus on the protection of children.

Guidelines

The guidelines state that any disclosure made by a child about abuse must be reported to social services immediately.

It is not for you to establish the facts – that is for the police and social services.

Therefore, it is vital that you do not question either the child or the alleged abuser (see Section 3). The BCPA can provide valuable support at such times; in particular giving moral support when contact is made with other agencies. Just like the clergy, other agencies have concerns about confidentiality and, as with the Church, they have sometimes overstated the 'need to know factor'. This has meant that the contribution of churches in the area of child protection has sometimes been neglected. Just as the Church has acknowledged the role of other agencies, so too the police, probation and social services have recognized that churches have significant contact with, and care of, children. The Diocesan Child Protection Policy and Procedures have done much to encourage a mutual respect between these agencies and the Church.

So what is the role of the clergy person within child protection?

Someone admits to child abuse during confession

The House of Bishops advises that the 'seal of the confession' should be regarded as absolute, i.e. that the information should not be passed on to anyone. However, this may not be consistent with civil law. The best advice at present is to urge the person to report their behaviour to the police or social services, and to withhold absolution until this has been done (see Section 2.5.3 for fuller guidance from House of Bishops' Policy).

More general advice

This is based on a piece written by a clergy person with growing experience of working with child protection issues within their parish.

Firstly, it is to ensure that the parish in which they are working is implementing the diocesan policy. If this is not the case, the clergy (with the PCC) make themselves vulnerable to a charge of negligence, with no insurance back-up. The clergy person does not have to personally carry out the procedures, but he or she does need to see that it is done. The guidelines are not just a safety net for when a crisis arises, but are part of good practice in terms of appointing children's workers, supervising and training them (see Section 9), and ensuring that children remain at the centre of what the gospel is about.

Secondly, it is to recognize the need for training. As a church of people who recognize their own failure and need of God and are therefore open to others who similarly fail, clergy will encounter people who have harmed children and who want to join the church. Some may wish to change; others may see the church as an opportunity to get close to children. Clergy need to recognize their own inexperience in this field. The church has been naive for too long in not seeing the dangers to which our children are exposed when there is an unquestioning acceptance of words of repentance and an expressed desire to change. It is not demonstrating a lack of faith in God's power to change lives if such desire to change is questioned and clarified. It is helpful for clergy to have knowledge of the 'cycle of abuse' and the destructive patterns that it creates.

Thirdly, it is to recognize that there will be conflicts of interest in such issues. It may be that a church is able to both offer support to people who have experienced child abuse in the past,

and to manage the risk of a perpetrator of abuse becoming a member of the church. But this will not be easy. Clergy should not succumb to the temptation of being superman, or woman, or playing God. It is very easy to become entangled in the complexities of such a situation and, as can be seen in other parts of this document, perpetrators can be very skilled in manipulation. Managing such a complex situation needs to involve eliciting additional support, for example from the BCPA, from another local clergy person who could perhaps offer pastoral care to the family of the alleged abuser, while someone else concentrates on the care of the family and the victim of the alleged abuser.

Fourthly, clergy need to learn to work not only with those within the wider church but also within the community. Clergy could seek to network more widely with other local agencies. These questions need to be addressed – do you know your local GPs, Police, social workers? Have you established liaison and lines of communication? Such networking will not only make the work of Child Protection much easier, but it will achieve a shift in the perceptions which others hold of the church.

Fifthly, it is important not to lose sight of Christ's perspective and his teaching on children. It can be easy to see the world only through the eyes of an adult. It's important to reflect how a child might view a situation, and much can be learned by beginning to view things from the eye level of a child, rather than clergy feeling they must always be the teachers.

7.2 Role of the Bishop's Child Protection Adviser

It is recommended that each Diocesan Bishop should appoint a representative to take steps to ensure that good practice to protect children is observed throughout his diocese, and to advise the Bishop on procedures to be followed when allegations of child abuse arise. Because of the importance of ensuring that the Bishop receives and is seen to receive independent advice, it is envisaged that the representative will normally be a person who does not hold any other paid church office or employment in the Diocese. He or she should have a good understanding of Diocesan structures and procedures, and should be capable of forging good relationships both with church people and with professional agencies. Where the person does not already have expertise in Child Protection issues, he or she should receive thorough training.

In the Diocese of Birmingham, the Bishop's Child Protection Adviser (BCPA), has the overall task of promoting good practice in all aspects of Child Protection within the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Birmingham. He/she should be contacted through the Bishop's Office or his Chaplain.

The House of Bishops identifies the following tasks as the responsibility of the BCPA, to be undertaken in consultation with other diocesan officers:

1. Development of policy, procedures and good practice guidelines

- Developing and regularly reviewing the diocesan child protection policy, ensuring that it is in a form easily accessible and understandable to licensed and paid workers and to volunteers.
- Ensuring each parish has adopted and implemented the diocesan policy and procedures.
- Monitoring and checking parish policies / providing advice and guidance on these.

2. Training

In the Birmingham Diocese this will be provided through the Diocesan Office.

3. Casework

Responding to requests for advice, information and guidance for individuals in the church who are concerned about the welfare of a child.

- Providing guidance and direction where there are concerns about adults who may be a risk to children.
- Supporting individuals when a referral to social services and/or the police is necessary
- Attending strategy meetings and case conferences as requested by statutory agencies. At times this will include preparing parish personnel for such meetings and attending with them.
- Supporting parishes during a child protection enquiry and afterwards. This may include ensuring support is provided for others in the parish who may be affected by such an enquiry, such as volunteer helpers, other leaders.
- Collaborating with social services, the police, the probation service, any of whom may make the initial approach.
- Providing advice to the bishop or other employer on the possibility of employment or redeployment of those with convictions, or continuing unresolved concerns regarding harm to a child.

The nature of this work will mean that at times telephone advice will suffice; at other times the role will require meetings with individuals, the preparation of reports, and the setting up of support networks.

4. Networking

The effectiveness of the Bishop's Child Protection Adviser (BCPA) is dependent on building professional relationships with Statutory Agencies: the local Area Child Protection Committee, the local Social Services Departments, the local Police – in particular the Child Abuse Investigation Unit, the Dangerous Person's Unit, the Anti-Vice Team, Multi-Agency Protection Panels, and the local Probation Service.

The BCPA should be part of the national and regional network of Bishop's Child Protection Advisers and any relevant local ecumenical forum or multi-faith forum.

Within the diocese, the BCPA will be linked with significant diocesan personnel, for example those responsible for children's work, youth work, the selection and training of clergy and lay workers, and social responsibility issues.

The BCPA seeks to promote best practice in child protection throughout the diocese. This will include parishes and the cathedral of the diocese, and may include other diocesan linked organizations, such as the Mothers' Union, local theological colleges and courses, and diocesan children/young people's events. Support may also be offered to other groups such as governors of Church schools.

7.3 Role of the Bishop's Staff

See Appendix A1 for contact details for the Bishop's Office.

If you become aware of a child protection matter, you should, after following the guidelines at Section 3 above refer the matter to the Bishop's Child Protection Adviser. In the first instance this must be done through the Bishop's Chaplain – for contact details see Appendix A1. The BCPA will report accordingly to the Bishop. If this route is not available to you (for example, an out of hours emergency), you should refer your concerns directly to Social Services (via their EDT if necessary) and/or the Police.

The role of the Bishop's Staff will be to take any necessary decisions relating to the management of the parish (or the Diocese) and the pastoral care of its people.

7.4 Role of the Bishop's Adviser for Children's Ministry

The Bishop's Advisor for Children's Ministry supports clergy and lay leaders (including both paid and volunteer workers in parishes and communities) in the nurture and development of children and the effective delivery of children's ministry.

The BACM provides training opportunities, support and advice, for those responsible for leading ministry with children in a range of subjects including, in particular, child protection, worship, evangelism, children's spirituality, godly play and children and communion.

He/She provides consultancy and advice to parishes in developing good practice in work with children; encourages and develops the church's involvement in work with children at all levels of diocesan life, particularly by participation in the meetings of Church Councils and Deanery Synods.

He/She is a member of the Bishop's Child Protection Management Group

7.5 Role of the Parish Child Protection Co-ordinator

The Co-ordinator has an essential role in a parish in relation to child protection. The Co-ordinator should be a lay person interested in taking best care of children and young people and those working directly with them. The Parish Child Protection Co-ordinator should have some understanding of child protection issues, for example through their work; a person with recent experience of child protection social work may be a useful recruit to this post.

In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary for the parish priest to be the Parish Child Protection Co-ordinator, but this is generally not desirable.

Main purpose of the job:

To adopt the role of parish representative on all matters relating to the protection of children and young people and to help the parish develop a culture of 'informed vigilance'.

The PCPC will be notified to the Bishop's Adviser for Children's Ministry and will be kept informed of developments and training events regarding child protection. The PCPC will maintain direct and regular links with those responsible for work with children and young

people and will provide support in all aspects of child protection and safe practice. The PCPC will be known to the congregation.

To whom the PCPC is responsible:

The incumbent and the Parochial Church Council .

Main duties of the job:

Information

1. To be responsible for the cascading of information in respect of Diocesan policy developments, local parish policy developments and training opportunities for children's workers and youth workers regarding child protection and safe practice.

Taking action

2. To provide support and/or advice to the incumbent and to all children's workers and youth workers in respect of the following:
 - Concerns about the welfare of specific children or young people within the parish;
 - Concerns about the behaviour of specific adults within the parish.

The PCPC should ensure that, when appropriate, situations are referred to the relevant statutory child protection agencies, namely the local social services department and/or the police child protection team, and that the Bishops' Child Protection Adviser (BCPA) is informed of any referral.

The PCPC must ensure that the incumbent is kept informed of any concerns about the welfare of a child or young person, or about the behaviour of an adult, and of any specific advice given to the children's workers or youth workers/volunteers where concerns exist.

Pastoral Needs

3. To be aware of issues relating to the following situations and to access specific advice from other sources should the need arise:
 - The management of risk in respect of known offenders and their contact with children and young people at church;
 - Support for families of abused children;
 - Support for survivors of abuse;
 - The possible impact on individual members of the church community when a referral is made to a statutory agency.

Recording

4. To take responsibility for ensuring that the following records are maintained and kept up to date within the parish:
 - All activities involving children and young people within the parish;
 - The details of all those appointed as children's workers or youth workers/volunteers;

- The dates by which the various safe recruitment procedures have been completed (as outlined in the Diocesan policy 'God's Children: Our Diocese') in respect of each worker/volunteer;
- The training completed by all children's workers and youth worker/volunteers regarding child protection issues.
- It is important that the PCC are aware of the type of information that will be recorded by the PCPC and that the database or system complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Policy

5. To ensure that a parish child protection policy is in place, that it is in accordance with and reflects the Diocesan policy 'God's Children: Our Diocese' and that it is reviewed at least annually.

Training

6. To monitor whether all children's workers and youth workers/volunteers have received initial child protection training and to encourage them to attend update training at least every three years.

Recruitment

7. Given the accountability and commitment to confidentiality made by the PCPC, he/she is ideally placed to assist the incumbent with the following stages in the recruitment process:
 - Assisting the incumbent in interviews either by arranging dates and/or by accompanying the incumbent at the interviews. It is good practice for the interview to be the first stage of the recruitment process. This will provide applicants with an opportunity to discuss any potential problems regarding their CRB or confidential declaration with the incumbent. Applicants should be given the option of a private meeting with their incumbent; this is because there may be matters they would rather not discuss with any other person.
 - Requesting CRB forms from the Archdeacon
 - Issuing paperwork to applicants:
 - CRB forms
 - Confidential declaration forms
 - Application forms
 - Job descriptions
 - Requesting references
 - Arranging training
 - Assembling documentation together, in readiness for the incumbent to verify against the applicant's ID.
 - CRB – completion of section X on the forms

Verification of documentation is the responsibility of the incumbent.

- The information recorded on completed CRB and confidential declaration forms is potentially highly sensitive and for this reason these forms should be returned to the incumbent for him/her to check.
- The incumbent is also responsible for verifying the applicant's identity.
- If the incumbent wishes to delegate responsibility for the verification of forms and ID documentation to the PCPC, the Archdeacon should first be consulted (see section 11-P2, Page 6). Individual applicants should still be given the

opportunity to share confidential information with the incumbent alone if they so wish.

The ultimate responsibility for recruiting suitable children's workers and youth workers remains with the incumbent. The PCPC must be fully aware of those matters about which the incumbent needs to be informed.

Maintaining Confidentiality

8. To ensure that all personal information pertaining to prospective workers or volunteers and all information relating to specific child protection matters within the parish is treated with sensitivity and that confidentiality is maintained at all times.

To ensure that all sensitive and/or confidential documentation is suitably stored and locked away in secure parish or church premises.

Health and Safety

9. To liaise with those within the parish who are responsible for the Health and Safety aspects of children's work and to support children's and youth workers in ensuring that safe practice is exercised at all times.

In most cases this will be a voluntary role, although the duties described may form part of the responsibilities of a paid post.

In the interests of children within the parish, it is essential that there is a positive working relationship between the incumbent and the PCPC and that the needs and responsibilities of the PCPC are appropriately prioritised. Regular opportunities should be made for the PCPC and the incumbent to review together the effectiveness of the PCPC role within the parish and for either to address any difficulties which may exist.

A process should be agreed between them for releasing the volunteer from the role of PCPC if appropriate.

Attitudes

The PCPC will need to believe that:

- Children and their contribution to church life are to be valued
- All children have the right to be kept safe both within and outside the church

Skills

The PCPC will need to be:

- A good communicator (including the ability to actively listen)
- An administrator with organisational skills
- Able to maintain confidentiality
- Able to deal with sensitive information appropriately
- An encourager and able to offer support to others
- Able to work closely with others when necessary
- Able to discern when it is necessary to seek out and act on advice

Knowledge

The PCPC will need to have an understanding of:

- House of Bishops' policy and the Diocesan policy for protecting children

- The issues relating to keeping children safe
- Safe recruitment practices and the CRB processes
- The Diocesan structure and support systems
- The possible impact on individuals within the church of a referral being made to a statutory agency

Qualifications

The PCPC will need to:

- Have undertaken initial child protection training and Health and Safety training (or be willing to do so at the earliest opportunity)
- Be willing to undertake designated PCPC training when available
- Have a clear enhanced CRB disclosure
- Ideally be without pastoral responsibility for under 18 year olds

Parish Child Protection Co-ordinators are supported with guidance and information by the Bishop's Child Protection Adviser (BCPA), and relevant Diocesan Staff – see Appendix A1 for contact details.

7.6 Role of the Parish Children's Advocate

Each Parish should appoint a person to be a Children's Advocate.

In the Diocese of Birmingham the role of Parish Child's Advocate is seen as broader than that described in the House of Bishop's policy. We recognise that children suffering abuse may disclose to any person, and not necessarily the 'appointed' person.

In line with the motion passed at Diocesan Synod in March 2004, parishes are urged to appoint a Children's Advocate on the PCC as someone who can be a voice and speak on behalf of the children in the parish. The person will represent the children's views and needs with regard to ministry, mission, worship and their pastoral care, which might include being someone to whom children or young people feel they can go to with concerns or even to disclose abuse.

The Advocate should:

- receive child protection training;
- be checked under normal parish child protection procedures including enhances checking through CRB;
- be in regular contact with children through activities in the parish;
- be in regular contact with those who lead activities or groups for children in the parish, attending children's team meetings in order to be aware of any issues regarding children which need to be raised at PCC;
- attend PCC meetings;
- be notified to the Bishop's Adviser for Children's Ministry as the Parish Children's Advocate in order to be kept informed of developments and training events regarding children's ministry;
- be notified to the church congregation;
- be notified to the children and young people in the parish.

Ideally, the Children's Advocate should be a different person from the Parish Child Protection Co-ordinator, but in practice the same person could fulfil both roles.

7.7 Role of the Bishop's Advisers

Appendix B gives a list of Advisers who might be referred to for advice or information in relation to this Policy.

If information is required in relation to a specific child protection issue – for example, clarification about a suspicion of abuse – then the BCPA should be contacted.

In the case of other related child protection matters – for example, the ratio of adults to young people on a visit to the bowling alley – then it would be appropriate to contact the Bishop's Adviser for Youth Work.

Advisers are able to direct parish members to specific information and resources, provide training, and are available for consultation. They can also meet parish members to work through general concerns relating to specific areas of work. The Ministries Forum issues a mailing, twice a year, which includes substantial material to support work with children and young people.

If there is any uncertainty, then ask.

7.8 Role of the Bishop's Director of Communications

A case of Child Abuse linked to anyone with church connections will be of media interest. It also has the potential to develop into a crisis.

A crisis is an unplanned event, which triggers real, perceived or possible threat to the reputation or credibility of an organization. To manage a crisis effectively requires not only managing the crisis BUT managing the communication of the crisis - internally and externally.

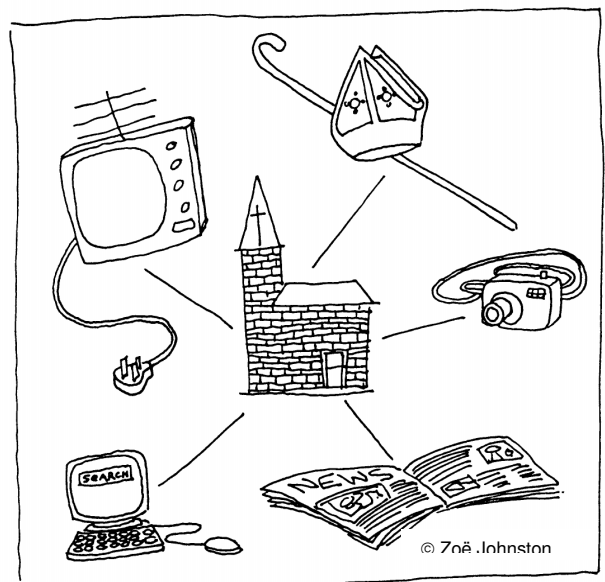
The Bishop's Director of Communications should manage the communication of the crisis, while the Bishop's Child Protection Adviser and other key personnel will manage the crisis.

If the communication is not handled effectively, it can extend the crisis. It is essential to follow a crisis plan and procedure.

Pre-crisis planning:

To avoid inaccurate, contradictory and incomplete information and general confusion, there should be:

- Anticipation of events
- Accurate information available
- A cohesive strategy
- Establishment of a crisis communication management team
- Communication through a single credible spokesperson



Procedure:

1. Bishop's Director of Communications (BDC) and Bishop's Child Protection Adviser (BCPA) informed of the facts
2. BDC prepares the media strategy including statement in co-ordination with BCPA
3. All media contact channelled through BDC, who will issue statement on request and call a press conference if necessary
4. BDC, BCPA and other key people to meet to manage the crisis
5. BDC to be updated on any developments immediately

See Appendix A2 ☎ 0121 561 3704

for contact details of BDC and BCPA

Recognizing that a child protection enquiry and its aftermath will have an impact on a congregation, with far reaching consequences, the following sub-sections contain guidance on the implications and how to manage them.

7.9 Support for the parish

In the event of a child protection enquiry in a parish, the BCPA is responsible for helping diocesan and parish staff to manage the impact. This includes ensuring appropriate support is offered to those who are involved.

The House of Bishops' Policy 2004 states:

An investigation into an allegation of child abuse by a member of the church community

Once a concern has been identified that a child may have been harmed by a member of the church community, and a referral made to the statutory authorities, it is important to liaise closely with them during any investigation. This is always a difficult time and needs to be carefully managed. It is the responsibility of the Diocesan Child Protection Adviser to co-ordinate the Diocesan response, attend Strategy meetings with the other agencies and interested parties and work with them during the investigation. The incumbent will be responsible in consultation with the Diocesan Children Protection Adviser to co-ordinate support in the parish.

The highest degree of confidentiality should be maintained and only the people who need to know should be informed of the circumstances. The diocesan communications officer should manage all media relationships.

Insurance advice

The Claims Manager of the insurance company should be informed at an early stage by the Bishop, the Diocesan Child Protection Adviser, the incumbent or other employer. Advice should be sought about the insurance position and any steps needed to be taken to safeguard it. The Claims Manager will also need to be kept in touch with developments. Any person accused of abuse where they have the benefit of insurance should also inform their insurance company.

Suspension

In all circumstances where an allegation is made relating to beneficed or licensed clergy, licensed or accredited lay workers, paid lay staff or volunteers, consideration must be given to whether a person should be suspended from their duties whilst the statutory agencies undertake any investigation. Suspension should be seen as a neutral act.

Suspension allows for an individual to stand down or stand aside while matters of concern are considered. The suspension is primarily for the protection of children but the needs of the person themselves and their family should also be considered particularly in the light of media attention. In order to decide whether or not to suspend the person, the Bishop (or employer or manager) should seek legal advice and consult with the Bishop's Child Protection Adviser, who will have taken advice from the statutory agencies involved in the investigation. This guidance will assist in determining whether it is possible and appropriate to suspend the person temporarily or ask them to take leave of absence or have their duties curtailed to prevent contact with children. Decisions should always err on the side of caution. A person should always be suspended if he or she is charged with a criminal offence against a child or young person.

Pastoral support

During the investigation the child or young person and their family will need support. Another person will need to support the alleged offender. People involved in support should be uninvolved with the investigation or disciplinary proceedings and may be chosen from outside the diocese to ensure neutrality. The police advise that it is important that these parties should not communicate with each other about the allegation, so that evidence is not contaminated. In the case of allegations against a priest, the archdeacon will need to manage the impact of the investigation on the parish.

The impact within the parish will be affected by factors such as -

- whether or not the alleged perpetrator holds a position of leadership
- whether or not the alleged victim's family belongs to the church
- the length of time there has been church involvement by either the victim and/or the alleged perpetrator and their family
- whether or not the alleged abuse has come to light via a source in the congregation.

It is impossible for any policy to give definite answers to all eventualities, and almost any situation of concern will require judgements of one sort or another. In such cases, it is always advisable to seek outside support, be it a brief telephone conversation or ongoing meetings with the BCPA. No parish should feel isolated. Many avenues of support are available.

In cases where there are grounds for suspicion of abuse, support for the parish can be discreet and planned, and involve a limited number of people, including the BCPA and a member of Social Services.

Where an allegation of abuse has been made and an investigation is being undertaken, the effects on a parish can be likened to a large stone being thrown into a still pool of water. It creates a ripple effect, which can continue for some time. In such a case, a substantial investment in time and resources to manage the situation will be necessary, and support for the parish will be essential.

For example, where it is alleged that a child has been abused by a member of the church, strong feelings of shock, anger and disbelief will be experienced by members of the congregation and parish staff alike. At various stages, people will need opportunities to ask questions, express their feelings, and listen to the views of others.

Practical arrangements will need to be made for the pastoral care of the accused and, if appropriate, their family (see sections 7.11 & 7.11). This may evoke a sense of bereavement for some in the congregation and give rise to divided loyalties.

Specific groups may have particular issues that need to be explored. For example, those working with the children may need the opportunity to consider what has happened in relation to their role. (See Section 7.13).

Should a situation such as this arise, it will not be possible to minimize it. People will need an environment of openness, and opportunities to deal with the many issues that emerge.

7.10 Support for the child

It should be recognized that, where the alleged abuse is being perpetrated by another church member, the child and his/her parents or carers may not want to receive any contact from members of this church. Any approach needs to be carefully and sensitively planned. During the investigation an approach should not be made without consultation with the BCPA, who will have sought guidance from the investigating officers and will therefore be in a position to advise whether contact should or should not happen, and where the boundaries need to be.

If the child has chosen to confide in a member of the congregation, then he/she may be the most appropriate person to make the contact and to provide support. Given that we know children tend to blame themselves for their abuse, it needs to be recognized that if no support or contact is offered, this could confirm the child's view that this was his/her fault - that he/she was to blame.

Some children may be very reluctant to return to their children's activity, fearing that they will encounter the alleged abuser. It is therefore important to provide information to the child to allay this fear, and to convey that he/she is very welcome to return to the activity.

However, should the child return, it may be appropriate for one person in the church to be responsible for how this is managed, as, if this has become public knowledge, there may be other members of the congregation who "blame" the child for what has happened. The child, therefore, may need protection from any overt or implicit hostility.

All of these aspects will be discussed with the social worker(s) involved, and guidance sought by the BCPA.

The following principles should advise any support for the child in the event of their returning to their usual activities:

DO

- treat the child normally
- give the child the usual opportunities for participation in all the group's activities
- accept that the child may display his or her anxieties/distress through aggressive or withdrawn behaviour, so make allowances
- be patient; affirm and reassure the child if or when s/he shows distress

- if the child expresses concern about what is happening, continue to reassure him or her that this is not their fault
- tell the parents if the child is upset during a group activity.

DON'T

- question the child about the alleged abuse
- question the child about what is happening
- question the child about his/her feelings
- attempt to contact the child if the parents/carers don't want you to.

7.11 Support for the child's family

As outlined, the child's parents are likely to feel considerable anger and hostility to the church if the alleged abuse has happened there. They may not want any contact from members of the congregation. They may not want anyone to get in touch with their child. There will be implications if there are brothers and sisters who also are involved in other children's activities.

Any direct contact with the family during the investigation should only be made after consultation with the BCPA, due to the need to have guidance from the investigating officers. There will be the need for very strict boundaries, regarding confidentiality in this matter. It may be that knowledge of the alleged victim is not known within the congregation. Any approach to the family should initially come from the incumbent, who could include the BCPA. The purpose of this contact would be to:

- establish what support, if any, the family would find helpful from the church.
- convey to the family that the parish and the diocese are working with the investigating officers and taking this matter very seriously.
- communicate to the family that the alleged perpetrator, if they have held a position of responsibility in relation to work with children, has been suspended from these duties pending the outcome of the investigation.
- advise the family that an independent group of people should be established to provide support if they prefer to receive help from someone outside the congregation.

7.12 Support for the alleged perpetrator

For many, this area raises the most ambivalent feelings of all. A sense of justice – innocent until proved guilty, anxiety about what has been described as false memory syndrome, beliefs that some children will lie to seek revenge on adults, a fear that a person's life will be ruined, will all lead to some wishing to come to the person's defence and demonstrate a desire to show solidarity.

Others may recoil in horror, decide there is 'no smoke without fire', begin to speculate or interpret the personality and behaviour of this person, and arrive at their own conclusions.

The quest for the **truth**, while a normal and understandable reaction, is not the role of the church. The establishment of whether children could be at risk from this person and/or whether there are grounds for a criminal prosecution are decisions for the statutory agencies. Concentrating our energies into speculations over what did and did not take place distracts from the focus of how the church supports the alleged perpetrator and her/his family.

This focus regarding the alleged perpetrator should be in offering empathy for them as a person in their plight, without colluding or reinforcing any version of events.

As with the other areas, this support needs to be informed by guidance from statutory agencies. Thus the incumbent and others in positions of leadership within the church should liaise with the BCPA from the outset, who will help plan how to co-ordinate and manage this aspect of pastoral care. It is important to realize that in the event of criminal proceedings, 6 to 9 months may elapse before a trial date, so the timing and continuity of pastoral care will have considerable resource implications.

As with others affected, it will be necessary to negotiate with the alleged perpetrator what support he/she would want from the church, and if and how this could be provided. The parish would be able to access resources from the central team.

7.13 Support for the alleged perpetrator's family

The trauma for all members of the family cannot be overstated. A compassionate, non-judgemental, accepting and practical response from significant people in the parish may be appreciated by family members.

Different family members are likely to need or ask for different kinds of help.

The church leaders should be aware that, if there are children in the family, the Social Services Department will have a duty to ensure these children are not or have not been at risk of abuse. It may be that these children become part of their enquiries.

Such children may be involved in similar activities to the child (children) who has made the allegation. Judgements will be needed about how this will be managed within the parish. There will be issues of confidentiality, and therefore restrictions on who can know which information.

As with the other areas, the response needs to be planned, co-ordinated and set up via the BCPA, in collaboration with the investigating agencies.

7.14 Support for church members with significant roles

As described, the impact of a child protection enquiry within a church community will have widespread implications, which will occur at different times as or if more information comes into the public arena. Different people in the parish will be affected at significant stages. These may include:

1. The person who has become aware of the alleged abuse (the referrer).

2. The children and youth workers.
3. Leaders of other activities, for example, music group, choir, bell ringers, etc.
4. Staff members as well as the incumbent.

1. Support for the referrer

In the event of information about possible abuse coming to the attention of a church member, this person will need the full support and encouragement of the incumbent. It will be their responsibility to act on this information, and undoubtedly this will create considerable anxiety and probable distress. Having acted, and therefore involved the statutory agencies, the person is likely to experience considerable doubt about their action and worry that they may have made things worse for the child or for the alleged perpetrator's family. **These feelings and fears are normal.**

The person will be involved in interviews with Social Services, and may be invited to attend strategy meetings and/or the child protection conference. The BCPA will be responsible for ensuring that he/she receives preparation for what to expect and will accompany him or her to these forums.

If it becomes public knowledge that this person has referred the matter to Social Services, an ambivalent response from within the parish should be anticipated. It is possible the person could be subjected to hostility and criticism. Their support needs should not be underestimated, and it will be important for there to be close liaison between the Incumbent and the BCPA to ensure that appropriate ongoing help is provided.

2. Support for the children's or youth workers

If the child (children) who are the subject of the investigation and/or the children of the alleged perpetrator are involved in children or young people's activities, judgements will be needed about whether the leaders of such activities need to know about the child protection enquiry. The leaders will need both personal support and clear guidance on how to act.

In some circumstances, the subject of the allegation may choose to tell other team members him/herself.

In whatever situations the leaders or group members become aware of the situation, they are likely to experience a range of reactions, and it will be necessary to provide support to help them deal with these.

It may be appropriate to draw on people outside the parish with experience of conflict management, to work with the group.

Such decisions will be made following initial consultation and planning between the incumbent, the Bishop's Child Protection Adviser, and the Diocesan Advisers.

3. Support for leaders of other relevant groups

There will be similar concerns for leaders of other activities, should the child or the alleged perpetrator be involved in these.

The need to set up a similar support mechanism for them will be undertaken following consultation between the incumbent and the BCPA.

4. Support for staff members

Parishes with a staff team may be in a position to delegate different roles and responsibilities, and provide mutual support for each other. However, discussions about the involvement of other staff members should only be made after the initial planning with the BCPA.

Access to individual support may be requested by staff members.

The staff team may find it useful at different stages to meet with a facilitator from outside the parish to reflect on the impact of the situation for them as a team.

The BCPA has a role in ensuring appropriate supports are set up.